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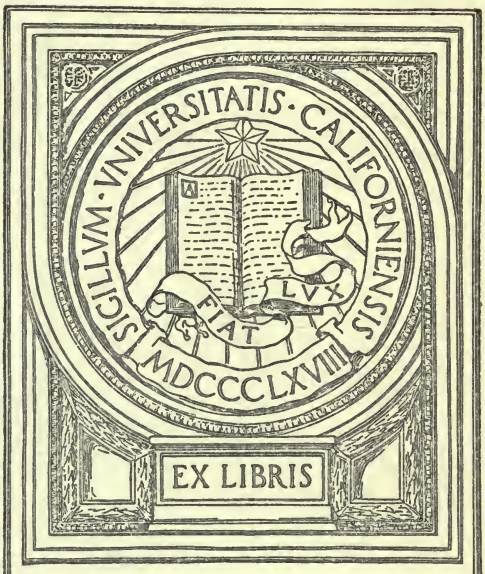

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Miss Patty has a peep through the Misses Perkins' telescope.

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THE

WIDOW MARRIED;

A SEQUEL TO

"THE WIDOW BARNABY."

BY

FRANCES TROLLOPE,

AUTHORESS OF

"MICHAEL ARMSTRONG," "THE VICAR OF WREXHILL,"
&c. &c.

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THE WIDOW MARRIED.

CHAPTER XIII.

A SATISFACTORY DISCLOSURE, AND A JUDICIOUS PROPOSAL—A CONJUGAL TETE-A-TETE TERMINATING IN VERY AMIABLE RESOLUTIONS.

"It is quite bed-time, mama, is it not?" said Elizabeth Hubert as the door closed after the O'Donagough family. "I am very, *very* sleepy!"

"Good night, my dear," replied her mother, holding up her face to receive the farewell salute.

"Good night, papa," said Elizabeth, passing on to her father. But before he accepted the kiss offered to him, he detained her by the hand for a moment, saying,

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"What makes you look so very weary to-night, my dear girl? Have you walked more than usual to-day?"

"No, papa. We have walked very little to-day," replied the young lady.

"What is the matter then, dearest? You do not feel unwell, I hope. Do you?"

Elizabeth stopped short in the middle of a yawn to laugh. "Oh! no, papa! Pray do not send for the doctor! I feel perfectly well, only very sleepy."

"Perhaps you are tired of talking, Elizabeth? You and your young cousin have had time for a great deal of conversation. Did she tell you much about New South Wales?" demanded her father.

Elizabeth shook her head as she replied, "No, not a word."

"What then did you talk about?" asked the general.

Elizabeth again laughed, and again shook her head.

"Is that shake of the head to be considered as oracular as that of my Lord Burleigh?

Does it mean a very great deal," said her father.

"It means, papa, that I really and truly do not know what she talked about," replied Elizabeth.

"That is to say, you forget it. I presume, my dear, that when the discourse was going on, you knew of what subject, or subjects, it treated?"

"No, indeed, papa, I did not," was the quick reply. "My cousin said a great many things altogether, I believe, but I quite mean that I do not know what they were all about. I did not always understand her."

"Did you find her upon the whole an agreeable companion, Elizabeth?"

In reply to this direct inquiry, Miss Hubert, after hanging down her head a little, and looking for a minute or two rather embarrassed, replied,

"No, papa, I did not; and I do not think that my cousin Martha found me an agreeable companion either. Nor do I believe that we shall ever be very great friends."

"Why so, my dear?" said her father, drawing her somewhat closer to him.

"Because she does not seem to know or care the least in the world about anything that I like; and I do not know or care at all more concerning all she talks about."

"Well, Elizabeth!" replied her father, "this is unfortunate, but perhaps not very extraordinary. However, you know we may be all very kind and obliging to her, nevertheless."

"Oh! certainly, papa! of course, because she is a very near relation. Only perhaps, as she is so very womanly, mama would invite her next time to dine with you, and let Emily and me come into the drawing-room before you come up stairs, as usual. And then, for the rest of the evening, and when we were all together, I should not mind it at all."

Mrs. Hubert, who had changed her place while this conversation was going on, and seated herself close behind her husband, whose arm was thrown round his daughter, could hardly repress a smile at this improved plan of operations, but she did not permit it

to be seen, and said, with much matter-of-fact gravity, "I believe you are right, my dear; and if her mama makes no objection, I certainly will do so. Accident, education, perhaps the climate in which she was born, seem to have made this young cousin prematurely a woman, and throwing you together as girls of the same age, must, I have no doubt, be equally irksome to both. We will not do so again, Elizabeth. Good night, dearest!"

Miss Hubert repaid this expression of maternal sympathy with a very tender kiss, and bestowing one also on her father, with rather more fondness than usual, as if to show that she was exceedingly obliged by having encountered no opposition to the extraordinary measures she had been bold enough to recommend, she left the room apparently in excellent spirits, and without any external symptoms remaining of the extreme weariness of which she had complained.

"Miss Wilmot is right!" exclaimed Mrs. Hubert, as soon as the door was closed.

"There is evidently no danger of Elizabeth's liking this terrible cousin too well."

"Why yes, my dear," replied the general, "I think you may be tolerably easy on that point. And now Agnes, to speak without any jesting at all, I trust that your spirits will recover their tranquillity, and that you will cease to look every now and then as if you had just recollected some dreadful calamity that was hanging over you. The cause, my love, is really not sufficient to justify the effect. We are not the first people in the world, depend upon it, who have had a queer looking set of cousins arrive from distant lands to claim kindred with them. Will you promise not to worry yourself about it any more?"

"Yes, Montague. I shall behave better now. But I cannot tell you how I have dreaded the seeing my pure-minded ingenuous Elizabeth falling into any tone of intimacy with my unfortunate young cousin! and yet it seemed almost inevitable, when two young things of equal age were thrown toge-

ther. But I did not do our girl justice. Dear creature! I ought to have felt from the first that it was impossible."

"I think so, Madonna," replied General Hubert, rather reproachfully. "However, I will forgive this misdoubting of the wisdom and good taste of fourteen, if you will promise to support with perfect equanimity, whatever effervescence may chance to arise from the superabundance of these good gifts at three-score and ten. I confess to you, Agnes, I rather dread the arrival of aunt Betsy."

"And so do I too," replied his wife, laughing; "but it is with a very different sort of dread from what I felt when in doubt as to the effect that might be produced by this new acquaintance on Elizabeth, and my dear kind-hearted father, too! He will be here in a fortnight. And I perfectly-well know what will happen. At first he will feel that he cannot be too kind, too cordial in his welcome to my aunt—whereupon she will stun him with her eloquence, smother him with her

affection, wear his spirits out by her incessant calls upon his admiration for her daughter, till he grows nervous—falls into a fit of the gout, and instead of benefiting by the sea-breezes we have promised him, he will shut himself up in his room without saying a word about his sufferings to any body, but suffering martyrdom nevertheless."

"Yes, that will be the progress exactly, from benignity that desires the happiness of all the world, to a gentle melancholy, meekly resigning every hope of it for himself. Nevertheless, I think that by keeping guard over him pretty watchfully, I may be able, perhaps, to save him from a good deal of it. But who can keep guard over aunt Betsy? Who can prevent her seeing everything, hearing everything, comprehending everything—and—acting accordingly?"

"If she is very outrageous, we must laugh at her," replied Agnes; "not but it will be hers to laugh at us first. Do you remember her prognostications and her prophecies, Montague, when Mrs. O'Donagough first renewed

the intercourse with us? Will she not have some cause to triumph now?"

"No, no, no, dear—not the least in the world," replied the general. "There will be room enough in our little island, depend upon it, both for the O'Donagough race and the Huberts too; and we must be very silly folks, certainly, if we cannot contrive to see as little of them as our own sense of propriety will permit us to do."

Unquestionably it should be so," returned Agnes, musingly, "and therefore we will trust that so it will be. But tell me, Montague, what sort of conversation did that solemn-looking Mr. O'Donagough entertain you with, after we left the table? He is a singular-looking man, with an expression of countenance that seems to hover between natural audacity, and affected sanctification."

"Yes," replied the general, "it is a remarkably puzzling face—and manner too. I cannot make him out."

"Did he talk much?"

"No; very little—and I doubt if aunt Betsy

herself could have found much to object to in anything he uttered. Nevertheless I dislike him, without being able exactly to explain why."

"Nay, General Hubert, I think that riddle may be easily read," replied Agnes; "both in person and manner he is coarse and ungentlemanlike."

"True! yet that seems hardly sufficient to explain the feeling I have about him. There was an evident air of restraint in every word he uttered, yet it did not seem to proceed from what is usually called shyness either, for his conversation, such as it was, consisted chiefly of questions concerning all our family connexions, and in a style of pertinacity too, which shyness, I think, 'would gambol from.' Your father, in particular, and Frederick seemed to possess a strong hold upon his travelled memory."

"I suppose that was because my father was so very civil and good-natured the night of the famous leave-taking in Mrs. Peter's drawing-room," replied Mrs. Hubert.

"Yes, certainly, that may account for it as far as your father is concerned. But of the two, I think Mr. O'Donagough's interest seemed to be most keenly awake respecting everything of and concerning Frederick Stephenson—and I do not remember that Frederick did anything towards making an acquaintance with him on that memorable evening, beyond reconnoitring him from a distant sofa, through Nora's eyeglass, which was, if you remember, the mode by which at that time Fred constantly assisted all defects real or imaginary in his visual organs."

"Oh! I can see him now!" returned Agnes, laughing. "How well I remember his attitude as she, naughty girl, hid her laughing face behind him!—I am sure it is very good-natured in Mr. O'Donagough, if he saw all that and forgave it."

"He appears perfectly to have forgiven it, I assure you—inquired with an air of great interest where Frederic chiefly resided, asked if he was as gay and lively as ever, and, if I mistake not, begged to know how many

children he had—summing up the whole by assuring me that it would give him great pleasure to meet him again."

"Well, certainly that does look like being in a very friendly and affectionate frame of mind!" replied Mrs. Hubert, "and fortunately Nora never hears their names mentioned without declaring that she wished for nothing so much as to meet my aunt Barnaby again. I therefore see nothing to stop the renewal of the acquaintance so auspiciously begun through Nora's eyeglass."

"By the way, Agnes," resumed the general, "did not your aunt Barnaby on that occasion introduce her bridegroom as the *reverend* Mr. O'Donagough?"

"Oh, yes!—certainly she did. And I presume he is the reverend Mr. O'Donagough still, is he not?" returned Mrs. Hubert.

"I do not feel quite competent to answer that question," replied her husband. "He certainly did not tell me he was *not*, yet somehow or other I doubt it. I think, from his appearance, that it is most probable he went

out as a missionary—not of the Church of England, and if so, it is as likely as not, that on returning he left his frock behind him. He said something about young men's first ardent impressions and opinions being liable to change, and then muttered something about himself as being an example of this. But I felt no inclination for the autobiography which I fancied was coming upon me, and as he did not seem inclined to take wine, I put a stop to it by joining you."

"Very skilfully managed," said Agnes; "and to say truth I have sufficient faith in your generalship, *mon général*, to prevent my having much fear about your individual annoyance. But of all our difficulties the greatest is behind! Alas! Montague, who is it must break to aunt Betsy, on her arrival, the astounding fact that her niece, Martha, is in Europe—in England—in Sussex—in Brighton—perhaps in this very house! Who is it, General Hubert, that will tell her this?"

"Dearest Agnes! It can only be yourself," replied her husband maliciously.

"Hubert! Have you the heart?"

"Why, no, I rather think I have not," he replied. "But do you not think the wisest way will be for us to go through the scene together? If you insist upon my making the announcement *tête-à-tête*, you will have it all to go through again afterwards."

"True!—most true! Let us be together, Montague!"

"And pray, my love," resumed the general, laughing, "do you think it will be necessary to surround yourself with the same sort of *chevaux de frise* when the event is made known to your father?"

"Oh! no, not at all!—I am quite sure that everything which recalls the memory of my poor mother, has a charm for him. And then, observe, he has never seen my aunt Barnaby as you did, Montague, in the terrible days of her Clifton brilliance. Still less, if possible, does he know anything of her various offences against aunt Betsy; so that to this moment he is perfectly free from any feeling of dislike towards her of any kind.

He must be aware, I suppose, that we have quizzed her letters a little—but that's nothing. And do you not think, dearest Montague, that it will be but right and proper to leave him as much as possible in the same favourable state of mind towards her? Poor thing! I fear she is not more likely to make friends now, than formerly, and her plea of being my own mother's sister does often come upon me with a painful conviction of its strength!"

"Let it not be painful, dear Agnes!" replied her husband, kindly; "you may be obliging and useful to her in many ways, which need not interfere with our own comfort. Depend upon it the worst part of the reunion is over. What Elizabeth says of the young lady, will infallibly prove true of the whole party. They are not at all more likely to like us, than we are to like them, and I shrewdly suspect they are all three yawning at this moment with as much genuine weariness as ourselves. So let us go to rest, dearest, without permitting our Australian cousins to haunt us even in our dreams."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE O'DONAGOUGH FAMILY BECOME POPULAR, AND ARE THE CENTRE OF A CIRCLE—MISS PATTY FORMS A VERY IMPORTANT FRIENDSHIP, AND OPENS HER YOUNG HEART WITH ALL THE FRANKNESS OF HER AGE AND CHARACTER.

During the fortnight which followed, General and Mrs. Hubert, with their eldest daughter, were absent from Brighton on a visit, at a friend's house, about twenty miles distant. Mrs. O'Donagough considered this as a most unfortunate *contretems*, and bewailed her ill-luck accordingly; but to say the truth, neither her husband nor her daughter shared her sorrow. Mr. Allen O'Donagough was perfectly satisfied for the present by having convinced himself that no floating vision of Major Allen existed in any cell of memory, either

with the general or his lady, which could be called to light and life again by looking at him.

It was not then, and it was not there, however, that he hoped to profit by the acquaintance, and he was quite as well pleased to be left just at first in the free and unobserved enjoyment of his restoration to the pastimes of "auld lang syne," without having before his eyes the fear of not being sufficiently aristocratical in the estimation of General Hubert.

As to Miss Patty, the intensity of her happiness was much too great to leave room for anything like regret. Sallying forth at least six times in every day, sometimes in one smart set of ribbons, and sometimes in another, sure each time of meeting "*lots of men*," as she remarked to her mama, "who did nothing but stare at her as long as she was in sight," how could she fail to await with patience the coming on of the adventures which she was determined to have some day or other with those "two darlings" who had

bowed to Elizabeth? She did wait with patience, or rather she could hardly be said to wait at all, for every hour of every day had its allotted joy, till at last she ceased to care about "*those two young fellows*" at all.

No sooner was breakfast over every sunshiny morning, than either father or mother were told that they *must* come with her to the pier; and either father or mother obeyed, nothing loth, sharing with parental pride in her delight, as every eye followed her in her laughing, bounding, ringlet-shaking, ribbon-fluttering course.

"That's Dacre, mama! Ain't he beautiful? He's major in the ——. The maid says he is going to be married, but I'll be hanged if I believe a word of it. He didn't ought to look that way at me, mama, if he's going to be married, did he?"—may be quoted as one among a thousand speeches which proved the amiable tone of confidential familiarity which existed at this time between Mrs. O'Donagough and her daughter, and it would be doing the fond mother injustice, were it not added,

that all such outpourings of her young daughter's heart were welcomed with a sort of joyous sympathy, which fostered and strengthened every feeling they displayed.

Nor was Mr. Allen O'Donagough a whit less indulgent to his blooming heiress. Not indeed, that she so frequently made him the confident of her military speculations as her mother; on the contrary, his presence generally acted in some degree as a check on her communications in this line: nevertheless, there were not wanting a multitude of occasions on which his affection, and her influence, were displayed. She made him subscribe to both the principal libraries, because, as she said, "it was so abominably provoking to know that anybody that one particularly wanted to see was lounging at either, and not to be able to go in, and sit down for a little while, if one liked it." She repeatedly coaxed him to take places at the theatre for herself and her mama, though he protested that the lamps made his head ache so much, that he could not stay with them; but this want of

gallantry was fully atoned for, by his making acquaintance at the billiard-table with one lieutenant and two ensigns, whom he brought home to play whist, and eat lobster salad, twice in the course of the week; thereby putting the keystone to his daughter's triumphant felicity, by giving her the chance, every time she went out, that three officers in full uniform might turn round on meeting her and her mama, and clank their swords upon the pavement beside them, for as many blessed moments as they could spare.

In short, Patty felt convinced that it was impossible to have a better father, and had the point been still unsettled, his conduct in a little scene which took place after they had been in Brighton about a week, would have put the matter quite out of doubt.

"Papa," said the lively girl one morning, as they amused themselves by standing together to watch the bathers, "Papa, you must let me bathe!"

"Bathe, Patty?" exclaimed Mr. O'Donagough in reply; "what on earth should you

bathe for? Why you are the very picture of health, child, and a very pretty picture too, I must say. Better let well alone, Patty. The sea may tan your nice skin for what I know."

"Not it, papa!" cried Patty, snapping her fingers gaily in his face. "My skin will bear more than that before it is spoiled, I'll answer for it; and bathe I must, papa. Upon my word and honour I must! Now do just look at those heads bobbing up and down, and peeping round to look at each other. Isn't that capital fun now? Indeed, indeed, papa, you must let me bathe; and if you don't, I won't mind a single word you say about wearing shabby things out of sight, or anything else, for a month to come. You had better mind what I say at once, Pappy," added the young lady, mimicking her mama's constant phrase when lecturing herself, and only substituting Pappy for Patty, at the end of it.

This last sally was more than the father could withstand; the mimicry was excellent, and his enjoyment of it so great, that he swayed himself backwards and forwards upon

the sea-rail, over which he hung till his daughter seized the flaps of his coat to pull him back, lest he should fall over it.

"You little devil, you!" burst from him as soon as he could recover his voice. "I should like to see the man that could say you nay. And so you must bathe, must you? And bob your handsome head up and down among the rest of 'em? And so you shall, saucy one, if you like it. Only it must not be above once a week, Miss Patty, remember that, for it comes deuced dear, I promise you."

In short, in one way or another, the first week, and the second week wore pleasantly away, notwithstanding the absence of their great relations, and considerably before the expiration of the fortnight, Mrs. O'Donagough herself confessed, that much as she doted upon her darling Agnes, Brighton was a very delightful place, even though she was not there to enjoy it with her.

The daily increasing intimacy between Mr. O'Donagough and the sporting portion of the officers quartered in and near the town, had

unquestionably much to do with this general family feeling that Brighton was the most agreeable place in the world; but about three days after the departure of the Huberts, another circumstance occurred which greatly enhanced their enjoyment of it.

In the same house with the O'Donagough family, occupying the front parlour as their sitting-room, lodged two young ladies, sisters, of an uncertain age, but of the most certain decorum and respectability. The windows of their parlour, commanding as they did the approach to the house-door, and a full unbroken view of the steps leading to it, enabled these young ladies to form a very just and accurate estimate of the number and quality of the guests who visited "the family in the drawing-room." "Tell me who are your friends, and I will tell you what you are," was a proverb, the recondite wisdom of which was familiar to the minds of both the sisters, and it would have been difficult to find an occasion on which it would have been more profitably applicable. A few days of diligent

observation, followed by a clear-headed logical deduction of conclusions from premises, enabled the two Miss Perkinses to decide, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the O'Donagoughs were persons of high consideration, and the most unquestionable respectability. In the first place, the approach of General Hubert's stylish servant had been noted, commented upon, and duly estimated; and when the visit of the general himself and his lady followed, whose names and persons were as well known to the whole motley mass of Brighton elegance as those of royalty itself, the vicinity of such neighbours became matter of very serious importance indeed. Then quickly followed the information on the unquestionable authority of the maid of the house, that they had all actually dined at General Hubert's, and were, moreover, very nearly related to him. After this intelligence reached them, the excellent good sense of the Miss Perkinses decided that *a feeling of what they owed to themselves* rendered it absolutely necessary that they should in some way or other find

means of becoming personally acquainted with the occupiers of the drawing-room apartment.

This matter was still in discussion between the two sisters, though more as to the feasibility of the object they had in view, than from any doubt as to the propriety of the measure, when it was observed by both the ladies, each from the window which she especially called her own, that several military gentlemen, of different ages, but all, as Miss Matilda observed, looking perfectly like men of fashion, were coming and going, both morning and evening, in a manner that gave every reason to believe they were on terms of great intimacy with the family they came to visit.

No one in any degree acquainted with the moral and social map of the ordinary existence of single ladies, "living on their means," and passing a season at Brighton, can doubt for a moment that this discovery very sharply pricked the sides of the Miss Perkinses' intent of becoming acquainted with Mrs. O'Dona-

gough. In fact, it produced a sort of irritating intensity of purpose, especially in the mind of the youngest sister, which could hardly fail, sooner or later, of achieving its object.

"That is the *third* I have watched in and out to-day!" said Miss Matilda, in a voice that faltered from agitation, as Cornet Dartmore, of the —— dragoons passed out upon the pavement.

"The third, is it? I have seen two," returned the less observant elder sister; and then, after a moment of reflection, she added, "Of course, Matilda, the O'Donagoughs must see a great deal of the military at General Hubert's, and in that way I dare say they will get acquainted with them all."

"Of course they do, Louisa. You don't suppose I was so stupid as to express any surprise at it—quite the contrary; for I am sure I should think it the most unnatural thing in the world if they did not. What I *was* thinking of, and what I very often *do* think of, Louisa, was that all the vulgar, commonplace nonsense people talk, about the

disagreeableness of being an old maid, does not signify one single farthing. I, for one, despise it from the bottom of my heart. But what I know *does* signify, and in reality makes all the difference between being happy and miserable, is having the cleverness, good luck, or whatever it is, not to be left out of everything that is going on: and just to know gentlemen enough to speak to now and then, or to take a turn with one, like other people, if it was only for two or three minutes at a time."

"That is perfectly true, my dear," replied Miss Perkins, "and it is just like your good sense and right way of thinking to say it; and it certainly is very hard, when people are as reasonable as you are, that they should not have what they wish."

"I do think it is," said Matilda, with a gentle sigh; "and I give you my word and honour that, if I know my own heart, I should be perfectly contented and perfectly happy, if we could but get into a gay set of acquaintance. But *that* I do wish for, and I won't deny it."

"To be sure it would be a great blessing in every way!" replied the elder sister, with much feeling. "What a difference it would make every day of our lives! and of course, Matilda, you think about it still more than I do, and it is very natural you should, my dear. You are five years younger than I am, and that makes a great difference, particularly just at your age."

"Five years and three months," rejoined the younger. "My birthday is in September, almost the end, and yours in July, at the very beginning."

"Very true, my dear, so it is indeed. And besides, you happen to be so very remarkably young-looking, Matilda, that you look like a mere girl beside me. I am sure anybody in the world might take you for a dozen years younger than I am, at the very least, instead of five, or five and a quarter."

"I don't know about that, my dear Louisa," replied the younger sister modestly. "I suppose I *do* look rather young, because everybody says so; and besides you don't make the

most of yourself, and I am sure I wish you did; you would look as young again if you would but take a little pains about it. That is one great reason of the difference, for I won't deny that I do take a great deal of pains, and so I think one ought. In my opinion *one owes it to oneself*, and it is quite a duty not to neglect it."

After this there was a pause of some minutes, during which both sisters assiduously continued the needlework on which they were employed; but in fact their silence proceeded more from the crowding of their ideas than from any lack of them.

"What do *you* think would be the best way, Louisa?" pronounced in an accent half playful, half shy, by Miss Matilda, were the next words uttered.

"The best way to do what, my dear?" responded Miss Louisa, with a look of perfect and most genuine innocence; for in truth the mind of the elder sister had been occupied in meditation on the general question of old-maidism, and not on that particular branch

of it which concerned the officers who visited the family in the drawing-room.

"Don't you remember what we were talking about, sister?" said the younger, colouring a little, and somewhat in an accent of reproach.

"Yes, to be sure I do, my dear; about the foolishness of caring so overmuch about being married."

"No, no, I don't mean that, Louisa! we were talking of something quite different. I want you to say, sister, what you think would be the best and most lady-like way of making acquaintance with Mrs. O'Donagough. I am more and more convinced, the longer I think of it, that it ought to be done somehow or other. It is really too stupid sitting here like two fools, and speaking to nobody."

"Dear me! Think what a head I have got! If you will believe me, I didn't the least bit remember that we had been talking about that," replied the more resigned and tranquil-minded elder sister.

"Then I wish you *would* remember it, Louisa! It is excessively hard upon me to have everything left for me to manage. Do tell me, will you, at once, what you think would be the most advantageous way of beginning the acquaintance?"

"Upon my word, Matilda, that is no easy thing to say. People so highly connected, you must remember, are never so easy of access as those that are less distinguished; and though I don't mean to say that people in our situation of life, living as we do independently on our own fortunes, are not company for anybody, yet this family cannot be treated in the same way one might go to work with common ordinary ladies and gentlemen, like the Larkins last year at Hastings, you remember, or those dear, goodnatured Thompsons at Worthing. But, to be sure, Matilda, it would be a very great thing for us both, and particularly for you, my dear. The place so full and all!"

"It would be just everything, Louisa! and one way or another it *must* be managed. That

fine tall girl of theirs looks the very picture of good nature, and Hannah says she isn't the least bit proud in any way; chattering away with her about the officers, and everything else, in the kindest manner possible," replied Miss Matilda, eagerly, "I would give the world to know her!"

"Then suppose, my dear," replied the elder sister, "we were to try first with her? I have often observed that very young girls, and quite old gentlemen, are the easiest people to get acquainted with everywhere. Suppose, Matilda, we try speaking to the young lady first?"

"Stop a moment, will you! I will hear the rest presently!" cried Miss Matilda, suddenly starting from the work-table, and hurrying out of the room.

Her sister looked up as the door closed sharply behind her, with some degree of surprise; but being naturally of a composed temperament, she soon restored her attention wholly to the quilling of her *tulle*, nor ceased her occupation, twiddling it into becoming

shape as a *tour de bonnet*, with rosebuds, ribbons, and so forth, till the entire fabric was complete. How long exactly this might have taken her she would have been at a loss to say; but when the work was ended, and had been tried on and approved, Miss Perkins began to wonder where sister Matty might be, chiefly because she wanted her to pass judgment on her performance, and confirm her own conviction that it was very pretty indeed.

Having looked at herself in the glass four several times, and out of the window upon the open sea as many, this sisterly longing was leading her towards the door, when she was stopped by hearing voices upon the stairs in gay, laughing, loud conversation, one of which was her sister's. Miss Perkins hesitated a moment whether she should open the door in order to discover who Miss Matilda's merry companion might be, and had just decided that it would be quite ridiculous *not* to do it, when the desired operation was performed from the other side, and Miss Matilda entered

side by side with Miss Patty O'Donagough, both talking together, fast and loud, and apparently the very best friends in the world.

Miss Matilda Perkins bore in her hand a telescope, and the first words her sister distinctly heard and understood were, "Oh, my dear Miss O'Donagough, you must positively just come in and have a peep! You have no idea how exceedingly amusing it is, especially just now that it happens to be high water, with so many boats about, and so many people bathing! This is Miss O'Donagough, sister—Miss Perkins, Miss O'Donagough. I was so lucky, Louisa, as just to meet this young lady, as I came down from our room with the telescope, and I have just been so excessively amused by it up stairs, that when I saw her look with curiosity at the instrument, I could not resist my inclination to ask her in to look through it. Is it not good-natured of her to come? So very kind and obliging!"

"I am very happy to see the young lady, I am sure, for that or any other reason," replied

the elder sister, assiduously opening the window, and fixing the telescope commodiously. "It is a very nice clear glass, Miss O'Donagough, and this window has got such a beautiful view! It is certainly very amusing."

"Now isn't that first-rate capital fun!" exclaimed Miss Patty, after a long steady gaze through the glass. "How I do envy you having such a beautiful amusement! You are looking through it all day long, ain't you, when you are not walking out?"

"We do use it a good deal, certainly," replied Miss Matilda, with an expressive nod of the head; "but I do assure you, my dear Miss O'Donagough, that both my sister and myself shall always have the very greatest pleasure in giving it up to you, or your mama either, if she would do us the favour to call in and use it."

"Oh! for that, mama will never get it out of my hands, I promise you, whenever I get it into 'em. But it will be very good-natured of you, I am sure, if you will let me come and have a peep sometimes."

Both sisters were most earnest and eager in their assurances that there was nothing in the world they should like so well as seeing her come in and out fifty times a day, if she liked it.

"Well, then, I shall like it, you may depend upon it," replied Patty. It will be such nice fun to gallop down here, whenever I am tired of the old ones up stairs. Hannah told me you were very free, pleasant sort of ladies, and so you are."

"I am sure it is very kind of you to say so," replied Miss Perkins, simpering, "and it will be no sacrifice at all for me to give up the telescope, because of course you know, my dear, I don't think so much of all those little gay amusements as my sister does. I am so many, many years older than Matilda, that it makes a great difference in all things of that sort, you know. So she and you, my dear young lady, may take the glass, turn and turn about, whenever you are here, and that would be better almost than having it all to yourself, for that might make your eyes ache, which

would be a pity, I am sure, so beautiful as they are."

Patty repaid this amiable prelude to lasting friendship by saying, as she again put the glass to her eye, "I am sure you are monstrous kind and good-natured, and so I shall tell mama, and papa, too—and I shall make them both come and see you."

A happy and triumphant look was exchanged between the sisters, while one of Patty's bright eyes was glued to the instrument, which made it, as she said, almost as pleasant to live in a house, as upon the pier itself, and the other screwed up with skilful and most patient perseverance till she had carefully scanned every individual head within reach of her examination.

The acquaintance thus happily begun between the drawing-room and the parlour, progressed without the slightest drawback from the feelings of any single individual concerned; and many were the miles of hot walking spared Mrs. O'Donagough thereby, at the which she rejoiced not a little, for

much as she loved to see and be seen, the excessive activity of her lively daughter, had already caused her to pant and to blow under all the brilliance of a September sun at Brighton, for more hours than were quite agreeable to her age and size, and it soon became an understood thing between the new associates, that the Miss Perkinses should take care of Patty in all her long lounges backward and forward, over the cliff, and under the cliff; while in return, Mrs. O'Donagough should *chaperon* them all, about three times a day to the libraries; by which arrangement, Miss Louisa got a great deal of very agreeable and improving conversation with Mrs. O'Donagough, and Miss Matilda very soon achieved a bowing and sometimes even a speaking acquaintance with all the gentlemen of Mr. O'Donagough's Brighton acquaintance. Their evening parties, too, were quite delightful. As the hours of daylight shortened, the hours for the card-table lengthened, and the company of the Miss Perkinses was agreeable in every way.

Nobody made tea for a party of gentlemen with so much skill, and so inexhaustible a stock of smiles as Miss Matilda; and no one was ever so well qualified to teach new stiches to waning eyes as Miss Louisa, who still struggling against spectacles herself, had discovered or invented a prodigious number of devices by which "patterns" would do just as well a little awry, as not.

In this way, the fortnight of her "darling niece's" absence made itself wings; and when at length Mr. O'Donagough brought home the news that he had seen General Hubert on horseback, it was hailed by his lady with infinitely less ecstacy than he expected.

"You don't seem half so much out of your wits, my dear, as I expected," observed Mr. O'Donagough, laughing in high good-humour —the result, probably, of the propitious termination of his morning's amusement. "I thought you would begin singing and dancing when I told you that your beloved niece was come back!"

"Nonsense, Donny! my singing and danc-

ing days are over, however, of course I am very glad, and I shall take Patty to call there to-morrow without fail. But the fact is, this place is so delightful—Patty is so much admired—the prawns and everything are so nice—those dear good Perkinses are such a comfort to me—and you are almost always in such high good-humour, that I am sure I don't want nieces or nephews, or anybody else, to make me happy here. However, of course I shall go and call to-morrow."

"Lor, mama, I hope you will leave me behind if you do!" exclaimed Miss Patty. "I had rather take one walk with Matilda Perkins, old as she is, than a dozen with that prig in petticoats, Elizabeth Hubert."

"That's likely enough, darling," replied her mama; "but if you are the sharp girl I take you for, you'll soon find that there's more reasons than one for making much of one's relations. You only just look at the Perkinses, Patty, when I talk of *my niece*, Mrs. Hubert, before them, or at Dacre, or Willis, or Foxcroft, or any one of the officers, and

you'll see fast enough whether they are worth calling upon or not."

"That's true as that the sun's in heaven, Patty," said her father, with great animation; "so keep a proper look-out, girl, or you and I shall be two."

"La! what a fuss you are making!" said the young lady, tartly; "I never said I meant to cut 'em, did I? But I suppose I may think them fogrums and quizzes, if I choose?"

"I don't care what you may think 'em, my black-eyed beauty, if you do but take care to make the most of the cousinship," said her father. "So mind, miss, I shall question your mother about your behaviour to-morrow, and if I hear of sour looks, or impertinent airs of any kind, you shall not bathe again as long as you stay at Brighton. Just mind that."

Miss Patty tossed her head, but said no more; for she, as well as her mama, had learned to know when her papa was in earnest.

It rarely happened but that when one

parent admonished Miss O'Donagough, the other declared her to be peculiarly impeccable, and even praiseworthy on that particular point; but in the present instance the case was otherwise. Mrs. O'Donagough was equally edified and gratified by the sentiments expressed by her husband, and to atone for any seeming indifference manifested by her own manner of receiving the intelligence of her elegant niece's return, she took an opportunity about an hour afterwards, when both the Miss Perkinses and Lieutenant Foxcroft were present, to make her joy and gladness appear with such eloquent vehemence, as elicited from all the most cordial congratulations on the event.

"You may well be proud of your niece, ma'am," said the lieutenant. "She's the first woman in Brighton, out and out."

"Ah! Captain Foxcroft," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, who generally gave brevet rank to all her military acquaintance, "beautiful as she is, that is her least merit I do assure you! Dear creature! I brought her up

entirely myself, and therefore you know I may venture to speak for her mental qualities. To be sure I *did* take incessant pains with her! Every one of her accomplishments were of my own teaching, and I must say it, though I should not, that she has turned out exactly what I desired she should be."

"How very gratifying!" exclaimed Miss Perkins.

"And such an elegant creature, too!" subjoined Miss Matilda: "What a reward for all your care!"

"I must say," added Mrs. O'Donagough, looking with an expression of ingenuous modesty in the face of Lieutenant Foxcroft,—"I must say that she had both precept and example to help her, and I have the pleasure of knowing that the excellent match she made was entirely in consequence of my having fortunately attracted the attention of General Hubert—he was only Colonel Hubert then, but a most distinguished man in every way; and when he found that Agnes had been brought up by me, he immediately

paid his addresses to her. Cannot you guess, my dear Miss Perkins, how gratifying the remembrance of this must be to my feelings while witnessing their present conjugal happiness?"

"Oh dear me! yes, I can indeed, Mrs. O'Donagough, and I hope and trust the same delightful thing will happen over again with your charming daughter."

"I am sure you are very kind," returned the gratified mother; "yes, that is exactly the sort of marriage I wish her to make—such high connexions you know!—so every way desirable."

And here, while Mr. O'Donagough and the lieutenant sat down to a game of piquet, Mrs. O'Donagough lowered her voice to a confidential whisper, while she poured into Miss Perkins's ear numberless interesting little particulars relative to many of her own youthful adventures, among which the touching episode of Lord Mucklebury's sending her a set of shells, long after they were parted for ever, was not forgotten.

While this went on at one end of the room, on the sofa, Patty, by a movement of the finger, and a wink of the eye, invited Miss Matilda to station herself beside her, at a still open window at the other.

"Don't go on listening to mama's prosing, Miss Matilda; there's no fun in that," said she, familiarly passing her arm through that of her new friend.

"What a dear girl you are," murmured Miss Matilda in reply; "and how I do wish you would always call me *Matilda*, without any *Miss* at all before it."

"Do you?" replied Patty, laughing; "so I will then, for I like monstrously to be intimate with you, because you are such a capital one for fun. Don't those dear feathers look beautiful in the moonlight, marching along under the windows?"

"That they do indeed, Patty!" replied her friend, with a speaking pressure of the arm. "That's Captain Thwaites that's just past: —he's reckoned the handsomest man in Brighton; but I think your cousin, General

Hubert, is handsomer, though to be sure, he is not quite so young."

"He handsome?—what that tall, thin, hideous, stiff old fellow? Oh, Matilda! if I could but show you *one* man, you'd never think any other handsome again—that is, not very, *very* handsome, as long as ever you lived."

"Indeed, Patty! and who is that, my dear?"

"Hush! Don't speak loud? But if I am to call you Matilda, and we are to be out and out real friends, I don't think it would be at all right for me not to tell you everything. For real particular friends you know, never have any secrets from one another."

"Dear creature!" exclaimed Miss Matilda in a whisper, with another affectionate pressure of the arm; "tell me everything then."

"And you will never say a word about it to mama, nor to your sister either?"

"No, not for the world, my dearest Patty."

"Let us lean out of the window then," said Miss O'Donagough, "and I will tell

you the history of the only real lover I ever had, that was worth talking about."

With arms still interlaced, and heads projected, as if gazing on the beautiful effects of the moonbeams on the sea, the two friends there stood together till Patty had poured forth the whole history of Jack's tender attentions during the whole voyage from Sydney; his escape from drowning—his recovery from death on her lap; and lastly, the parting kiss, by which, as she said, she well knew he meant to pledge his troth to her for life.

"But my darling girl, do you mean that he was a common sailor?" demanded the confidant, in an accent of considerable surprise.

"A common sailor, indeed!—Good gracious!—no, Matilda. Before he went on shore mama found out that he was certainly somebody of very great consequence in disguise."

"Good heavens! my dear, you don't say so? What a complete adventure? And you so young, too! Oh, you lucky girl!"

"Ain't I, Matilda? But when shall I see him again, dear? Do you think he will ever come to look for me?"

"You may depend upon it, Patty," &c. &c.

* * * * *

And so the conversation went on, deepening in its tone of affectionate confidence, till two or three more officers came into the room, and then Miss Matilda was summoned to her well-loved place at the tea-table. But this did not happen till a very broad and lasting foundation of friendship had been laid between Miss Matilda Perkins, and Miss Martha O'Donagough—a friendship which was not without a lasting influence on the happiness of both.

CHAPTER XV.

AN ARRIVAL — AFFECTIONATE GREETINGS AMIDST LATENT FEARS — THE DISCLOSURE — MANLY DIGNITY, AND FEMALE VENGEANCE — DETERMINED COURAGE — A TRIAL OF STRENGTH.

"HERE's aunt Betsy!—here's aunt Betsy!" burst from the little Emily, as she stood at the drawing-room windows the day after General Hubert, his wife, and daughter, returned to Brighton; and the words were accompanied with such gay clapping of the hands, and such joyous skippings and boundings, as left no doubt of the sort of welcome the great-great-aunt was likely to receive.

"She is come, indeed, mama!" cried Elizabeth, throwing aside the book she was reading, and exhibiting very nearly as much childish glee as her younger sister. "May I run down to meet her?"

"No, no, Elizabeth, let me go first and take her into the parlour," replied Mrs. Hubert, "she may be tired by her journey, dear, and may wish to be a little quiet at first."

"Mama! mama! Compton is come too! Compton is handing aunt Betsy out!" cried Emily, who still kept her post at the window. This was intelligence that seemed naturally, and of necessity to break down all restraints, whether of ceremony or prudence, and mother and daughters very nearly vied with each other in the velocity with which they descended the stairs. The old lady and her young attendant were, however, in the hall by the time they reached it; and the presence of the young man proved to be of considerable utility, occupying his two sisters so completely for a minute or two, as to give Mrs. Hubert the power of leading her venerable aunt quietly to an arm-chair in the parlour, and hearing her declare that she had enjoyed the journey exceedingly, and was all the better for it. Mrs. Elizabeth Compton, as she was of course called by all the world, save the

Hubert family, was at this time somewhat past seventy; but never was the allotted three score years and ten borne with less consciousness of their weight than by this fragile-looking little spinster. She was as thin as it was well possible to be, her delicate little hand literally permitting light to be visible athwart its slight integuments; but all there was of her seemed imperishable; hardly partaking of the materials on which the wear and tear of time takes hold, and with an unquenched spirit in her eye that shot forth the same intellectual vigour it had ever done.

"My dearest aunt!" cried Mrs. Hubert, fondly hanging over her, and looking into the cheerful face that smiled upon her, with truly filial affection,—"my dearest aunt, how delightful it is to see you thus so completely yourself, so perfectly well and unwearied, after your long journey!"

"No very long journey, dearest Agnes! You see how I am accompanied—and I suppose you guess that I arrived in London the day before yesterday, and waited till my ap-

plication to the Stephensons to run away with my young squire, from their river abode at Richmond to your marine abode here, could be forwarded and granted. Do you think the general will be very angry with me for stealing a week or two from the mathematics?"

"Not past forgiveness, aunt Betsy!" replied Mrs. Hubert, now stepping towards the door by which her son was entering, and offering, with successful rivalry, a mother's arms to draw him from those of his sister's, which still encompassed him?"

"Is he not grown, mama?" said Elizabeth. "Did you ever see anything so tall?"

"Rarely at sixteen, minus four months," replied his mother, looking at him with irresistible admiration. "I only hope he does not mean to grow any taller."

"I shall not answer that till I have measured myself with my father," said the boy, drawing himself up, and exhibiting as fine a face and person as nature ever bestowed. "My intention is to be exactly as tall as General Hubert; for, as it is my full purpose

and resolution to be a General Hubert myself, I really think the best thing I can do is to take him for my model. But do not talk of *my* being tall, Elizabeth is a perfect giantess! Thank Heaven! however, I do not think she is quite so ugly as she was—what do you think about it, aunt Betsy?"

* * * * *

Altogether there never was a happier family-meeting, every heart was overflowing with love and joy: and had it not been that the recollection of the O'Donagough family once or twice mantled the cheeks of Agnes with a blush which the old lady saw, but could by no means understand, every one of the little party might have been said to be in a state of perfect enjoyment.

In about an hour after Mrs. Compton's arrival, and when she was comfortably installed in the drawing-room, General Hubert returned from his ride, and again all the pleasure of the meeting was renewed. He was almost as fond of the eccentric old lady, as Agnes herself, and felt a degree of pleasure

from her society, and from the whimsical, but shrewd spirit of her conversation, which is rarely communicated by persons of her age. But in the midst of their lively talk, there were moments when the brave general looked almost as embarrassed as his fair lady, upon recollecting the nature of the *family news* he had undertaken to communicate, and not even the sight of his noble-looking boy, whom he had not seen since he left him at Sandhurst some months before, could drive Mrs. O'Donagough and her family from his head for ten minutes together. At length, suddenly coming to the conviction, like Macbeth, that—

> If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well
> It were done quickly.

He stopped his son Compton short in a very animated description, which he was addressing to his mother and sisters, of a royal review of which he had been recently a spectator, and saying, laughingly, "Aides-de-camps—chargers——dukes———marquises——firing and charging!"

"Mercy on me, Compton! you are like a magazine of powder in the very act of ignition. Do explode, for the especial advantage of Elizabeth and Emily, in the dining-room, will you—for I really want to converse a little with your aunt."

The gay young trio started up, and made their exit, while the face of their mother, who perfectly comprehended the motive of the manœuvre, instantly became of a very bright "celestial rosy red," and she had actually the cowardice to walk to the other end of the room for her work-box, in order to have something on which to fix her eyes, that she might avoid the danger of encountering those of aunt Betsy.

"He-hem!" said the general.

"Are you going to work, dear Agnes?" said the old lady. "Don't go to work yet, love! I have not looked at you half enough."

"My dear aunt!" began the general, and paused.

"My dear general!" returned the old lady, gaily, with her head a little on one side, and

her bright eyes twinkling in his face, with a look of exceeding pleasure; for there was nothing she liked better than to be called "aunt" by General Hubert.

"My dear aunt, we have some news to tell you," he resumed; "and I am sorry to say that I am not quite sure you will like them."

"Indeed! what can that be, I wonder? Montague is not ill, is he? I have seen all the rest of you—pooh! nonsense, general!—tell us your news, I do assure you I am not in the least afraid to hear them."

"Aunt Betsy!—Mrs. O'Donagough and her family are come to England."

A most perfect silence, which lasted for at least two minutes, followed this announcement, and then the old lady said, in a sort of lively tone, peculiar to herself, quite indescribable, but exceedingly expressive of a little internal *méchanceté*—"Mrs. O'Donagough and her family arrived in England? Well, General Hubert!—I really cannot conceive why you should imagine this news would not be agreeable to me. All persons, I believe,

rather like to have their prophecies come true. Remember what that keen observer, the Dean of St. Patrick said,

> He'd rather that his friend should die
> Than his prediction prove a lie.

"Then why, my dear sir, should you entertain any doubt of my heartfelt participation of your joy on this occasion. Look up, my dear Mrs. Hubert!—never mind your carpet-work for a few minutes. Let me wish you joy, my dear! You are now about to reap the reward of all your unwearied and unceasing attentions to these amiable relatives! How you must enjoy the idea of it! And the general, too—just as his young family are growing up! What an advantage for them! Elizabeth in particular. I should think the young ladies must be nearly of the same age, and I cannot doubt that my niece, your aunt, Mrs. O'Donagough, formerly the widow Barnaby, keeping in mind the many proofs of affectionate remembrance which you have bestowed on her during the whole period of her absence, will indulge Miss Hubert with her daughter's company both in

town and country as much as you could possibly desire. I really wish you, heartily, joy of this most happy family re-union. It is, as indeed you well know, no more than I was quite sure would happen; but as you never appeared to agree with me in this opinion, the circumstance must come upon you with all the additional delight of being unexpected.—I wish you joy, General Hubert, heartily."

General Hubert looked half angry at some parts of this harangue; but before it was ended he had perfectly recovered his good-humour, and said with a laugh, that was at least half genuine,

"Come, come, aunt Betsy! As you are great, be merciful—you certainly appear to have seen further into futurity, than either Agnes or myself—I freely confess that I never thought these good people would return to England, and I will freely confess, also, that I should have been quite as well pleased if they had not. But jesting apart, their arrival cannot in reality be matter of any very serious uneasiness to us, and I confess I feel not in the

least degree doubtful but that I shall be able to guard my stronghold, wife, daughter, and all, against all the attacks which the O'Donagough faction may be able to bring against it."

The flexible and speaking features of the little old lady's expressive face, changed as she listened to these words, from a sort of *gaieté maligne* to a look of lamb-like gentleness and submission.

"Oh! dear me, General Hubert! How can you for a moment suppose I doubt it. Don't mind me, or anything I say. It is only my foolish joking way, you know. I should behave better if you had not all, young and old, conspired to spoil me. But do not fancy for a moment that I am not aware of the utter impossibility that you should blunder in any way."

Agnes looked up at her aunt from the corner of her eye, and shook her head, though almost imperceptibly, as she listened to her; but the unsuspicious general walked across the room to the venerable mystifier, and taking her hand, replied, "Thank you, dear madam,

for your confidence in me. Even Agnes must know by this time that it is impossible to pass through life without finding ourselves occasionally obliged to associate with persons extremely far from agreeable; and the great secret I believe is, to learn how this may be done without jostling against them."

"I dare say it is," said Mrs. Compton, in the same gentle tone; "and you must have had so much experience in the course of your varied and busy career, that it cannot be doubted but you must understand this better than most people—at any rate, better than a poor old recluse like me."

"Perhaps I do know something about such mysteries," replied General Hubert, smiling, and dropping into a chair close beside the old lady; "and therefore I flatter myself that you will let me keep watch and ward over you all, and guard you from all social perils, let them come in what shape they may."

"Happy are those so guarded!" responded Mrs. Elizabeth Compton, solemnly.

Here again Mrs. Hubert looked into the face

of her aunt; but this time she did not shake her head, appearing on the contrary well satisfied at its expression, and looking herself more comfortable and at her ease than she had done since the discussion began.

"Perhaps," said General Hubert, now fearlessly resuming the theme,—"perhaps, under any other circumstances, I should be disposed to shake off the acquaintance of this O'Donagough family altogether, and so get rid of the inconvenience as you would do, my dear lady, at once. But I confess, after our long correspondence, it strikes me that there would be something very pusillanimous in this, and that it would look vastly as if we were conscious of not having tact and *savoir faire* enough to take care of ourselves."

"'A soldier, and afraid?'" cried Mrs. Compton, briskly. "Nay, then, my dear general, if such be your feeling, who can wonder at your scorning what none but an old woman, perhaps, would deem the better part of valour? But tell me, dears, in what part of England do our recovered relatives take up their abode?"

General Hubert and his wife exchanged a furtive glance; but the gentleman answered boldly, "I really do not know, dear aunt, where they mean to live; but at this moment, I believe, they are at Brighton."

The old lady was engaged in neatly folding a silk scarf she had taken from her shoulders; but, on hearing these words, she stopped short in the middle of the operation, and remained for about a minute as still as if she had been shot; and then, having taken rather a long breath, she resumed her employment, and pronounced very tranquilly the monosyllable, "Oh!"

It was precisely at this moment that a servant entered the drawing-room, and putting a visiting-card into the hands of Mrs. Hubert, said, "Are you at home, ma'am?"

This discreet individual was the old butler, although he had received no orders to deny his mistress, felt doubtful whether the recent arrival of Mrs. Compton might not render the admission of company inconvenient.

Mrs. Hubert changed colour as her eye glanced upon the card.

'Who is it, Agnes?" inquired the general.

But Agnes, instead of answering, gave back the card to the servant with a silent movement of the head, which indicated that it was to be handed to his master.

There could hardly be a greater proof of the high consideration in which Mrs. Compton was held, than that General Hubert coloured also as he read the same; but he rallied instantly, and said, "This is Mrs. O'Donagough's card, my dear madam. Perhaps we had better send down word that we are engaged? You are too recently arrived to wish for company."

"Decline seeing Mrs. O'Donagough on my account, General Hubert!" said the old lady, with a smile of ineffable sweetness. "Oh! no—I would set off for Compton Basset again instantly, if I believed such a thing possible. I do assure you I shall be delighted to see her. I consider her coming just now as peculiarly fortunate."

"Desire Mrs. O'Donagough to walk up," said the general.

"This is quite an unexpected pleasure," said Mrs. Compton, turning towards Agnes.

"I assure you I feel quite curious to see her." This was said so naturally, and moreover it appeared so very likely that the old lady might feel curious to see her travelled niece, that Mrs. Hubert was perfectly restored to composure by the assurance, and rose to receive her aunt and cousin with as little repugnance as if she had been alone.

This entire composure was, however, a little shaken by the ardour of Mrs. O'Donagough's approach, who rushed forward with the same warmth of rapture that marked the first interview with her beloved Agnes upon her arrival; and it required very considerable self-command on the part of Mrs. Hubert, to endure, without wincing, the long close hug bestowed upon her, conscious the while that aunt Betsy's eye was fixed upon her, and the capacious mass by which she was enveloped. At length, however, she was released; and then, with the sweet gentle gracefulness which could not forsake her, even when withdrawing from the arms of Mrs. O'Donagough, she said, "Give me leave, Mrs. O'Donagough, to introduce you to our aunt Compton. It is so many

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

Mrs. O'Donagough's magnificent behaviour to Aunt Compton.

years since you met, that it is probable neither would now recollect the other."

Mrs. O'Donagough started a little, but immediately put herself in an attitude of great dignity, while, probably to the astonishment of all parties, Mrs. Compton rose from her chair, and placing her hands before her, made the lowest possible courtesy, saying, as she did so, with a most courteous smile, "You wrong my memory, niece Agnes; and, as I should surmise, that of Mrs. Barnaby O'Donagough also. We are neither of us cast in moulds so common as to be easily forgotten. For myself, at least, I can declare, with all sincerity, that I should have recognised this lady as the daughter of Miss Martha Disett in any part of the world."

"Well, ma'am, and I believe I can say as much for you," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, ceremoniously returning the courtesy.

"You should have known me for Miss Martha Disett's daughter!" retorted the old lady, in her gayest voice.

"No, ma'am, certainly not," replied the

swelling Mrs. O'Donagough, filling a good-sized sofa with her presence as she spoke. "I could hardly have mistaken you for my mother's daughter, I think. But I should have known you for my father's sister anywhere."

"I thought so, I thought so. And pray is this beautiful young lady your daughter, ma'am?" said the whimsical spinster, fixing her looks upon Patty with a mixed expression of wonder and admiration.

Mrs. O'Donagough looked for a moment as if she did not quite know what she would be at; but her internal conviction of Patty's extreme beauty, and the indisputable glory of maternity which she knew attached to herself, and which now, for the first time, was displayed before the (of course) envious eyes of her old aunt, speedily restored her complacency, and she replied with an air that perfectly enchanted the old lady, "Yes, ma'am, this young lady is my daughter, Miss Martha O'Donagough; as remarkable, I beg to assure you, for the accomplishments of her mind, as

for the beauty of her person. Though I bring her up with the very greatest care, to prevent anything like vanity entering her head, I don't scruple to allow that she is handsome before her face—because she well knows that handsome is as handsome does. Her excellent father, who is one of the best and most thoroughly gentleman-like men in the world, has always taught her to understand that beauty is of no consequence whatever in comparison to good behaviour."

"What a treasure she must be!" cried Mrs. Compton, gently but fervently; "and so beautifully dressed too! It is easy to perceive, Mrs. Barnaby—O'Donagough I mean,—that she is a young lady of great fortune."

"Yes, ma'am, thank God! The days are gone and over with me when I wanted anybody's help—Mr. O'Donagough *is* a man of fortune, and in every way a gentleman."

"Indeed, ma'am, it seems to me that you are the most fortunate lady in the world," said Mrs. Compton, gravely.

"And so I am, ma'am, and no thanks, I must say, to anybody but my own good conduct and knowledge how to conduct myself. However, I am willing, if other people are, to let bygones be bygones—and only to remember that my relations *are* my relations, without raking up any disagreeable old stories about what's past."

"I am sure, Mrs. O'Donagough," replied the old lady, in what might be almost called a voice of contrition,—"I am sure we must all be very wicked people indeed, if we returned such generosity on your part with ingratitude. I am grown older, and I hope wiser than I was, Mrs. O'Donagough, when I saw you last, and I hope my conduct will give proof of it."

"Well, ma'am, it is never too late to mend," replied the large lady, bestowing a sort of encouraging nod upon the little one, whose figure, by comparison, hardly seemed to exceed the proportions of a fairy; "I dare say we shall get on very well together. And as you took such a fancy to my uiece Agnes, because she was pretty, it's likely enough you may do

the same by my daughter; and if you do, you will find her everything that a gentleman's daughter ought to be,—and as good and civil to you as if you were as handsome and smart, and young as herself. Go over, Patty, and kiss your aunt Compton."

The young lady rose, and so did the old lady also; but no one save Mrs. Hubert, in the least degree comprehended her feelings.

"No, no, young lady!" she said, waving her off with her hand, and walking with a quick step towards the door as she spoke. "No, no, no! I know better than to let the kisses of a young beauty to be wasted on a little hunchbacked old woman like me! You must let me look at you, and admire you, which I am sure I shall do without ceasing. But as to kissing—no, no, no!—the young lady knows better than that."

With these words she slipped out of the room, and took refuge in one on the same floor, to which she had been already introduced as her own.

"What a funny old woman!" cried Miss

Patty, a little before the door was closed after her.

"Hold your tongue, child!" said Mrs. O'Donagough, rather *sotto voce;* "as we have made up all our old quarrels so well, I shan't let you put your own nose out of joint by any pertness, remember that. How wonderfully well the old lady takes care of herself!" continued Mrs. O'Donagough, addressing Mrs. Hubert, "I declare I think she looks better than ever she did in her life. By the by, my dear Agnes, what was all that stuff she told us, about her being as rich as a Jew? Don't you remember? I suppose it was all a joke, wasn't it?"

"Mrs. Compton is too generous to be very rich," replied Mrs. Hubert, gravely.

"What she still gives away all her little substance to beggars, does she? She need not have lived like a toad in a hole in her own farm-house as she did, if she hadn't turned her back on her own relations, and given all she had to make herself a name among the poor. Your wife comes of a very

good family, General Hubert, little as that queer old soul may make you think so."

"I am fully aware, Mrs. O'Donagough, of Mrs. Elizabeth Compton's claims to respect in every way," replied General Hubert with some stateliness.

"Oh! dear me! I didn't mean to doubt it, sir—I know too well what a gentleman is, to have any question of it. My own Mr. O'Donagough will, I am quite sure, conduct himself towards her exactly upon the same principle. But it is quite right, nevertheless, for the credit of the family, that you should, both of you, know that notwithstanding her unaccountable queer looks and ways, she is a born gentlewoman."

"Believe me, madam, I have never doubted it," replied General Hubert, rising as if to leave the room.

"Will you excuse me, aunt," said Agnes, rising also, "if I leave you now to go to Mrs. Compton? She is but just arrived from town, and may require some attention after her journey."

"To be sure, my dear, you are quite right: I never preach what I don't practise. Let us all be attentive to the poor old soul. I am sure, if she behaves but decent, I don't want ever to quarrel with her again. Come along, Patty. We shall find our party at the library, I suppose. I hope, my dear Agnes, that you, and the general, and Elizabeth, will all give us the pleasure of your company to tea and a sandwich some evening. Aunt Betsy seems so mighty brisk, that perhaps she may come too; and I'll engage my word for it that Mr. O'Donagough will receive her with every politeness."

Mrs. Hubert coloured, faltered, and finally turned an imploring look upon her husband, which he rightly interpreted into a petition that he would reply to Mrs. O'Donagough's invitation.

"You are very kind, Mrs. O'Donagough," said he, stepping forward; "but when Mrs. Elizabeth Compton is with us, we never answer for ourselves."

"My goodness!" exclaimed she, with un-

feigned surprise, "that *is* treating her with respect! But I suppose you have some reason for it. Upon my word, however, I would not engage to say that Mr. O'Donagough would go quite that length if ever she comes to stay with us. However, if you have really cockered her up to that pass, general, I suppose I must send a written invitation in proper style, and then you may consult her and let me have a regular written answer. I shouldn't wonder if the old lady was to feel a little curiosity to see what sort of style we live in. She'll find a difference, Agnes, I can tell her, from the time when you and I first broiled over to Compton Bassett, and found her stuck up in the middle of her bees. Do you remember?"

"Perfectly," replied Mrs. Hubert.

"He! he! he! What an old frump she was to me! Do you remember?—But never mind! I have promised the poor old soul that bygones should be bygones, and so they shall for me. Come, Patty."

* * * * * *

For a minute or two after Mrs. O'Donagough and her daughter had left the room, General and Mrs. Hubert remained looking at each other in silence. At length Agnes said, "This will never do, Montague! We really must not let them meet again. It is impossible Mrs. O'Donagough should long remain insensible to the bitter quizzing aunt Betsy is pouring upon her."

"I do request, my dearest Agnes," replied the general, "that you will let things take their course. I have little doubt but that aunt Betsy will manage her gibes and her jestings too discreetly and too skilfully for any mischief to come; and even should the two ladies quarrel outright, it would be a matter of no great consequence. But the fact is, Agnes, that aunt Betsy's quizzings are rather directed against me than Mrs. O'Donagough. I understand her perfectly, dear whimsical little old soul, and, *entre nous*, I am quite determined to overthrow her tactics. She wants to prove that we have acted very unwisely in neglecting her advice when she

recommended us not to answer Mrs. O'Donagough's first letter from Australia; and I am determined to show her that I really know how to take care of myself and you too, even though the redoubted Barnaby, daughter, husband and all, have had their claim to kindred fearlessly admitted."

Agnes smiled.

"So then," said she, "the business afoot is nothing less than a sharp encounter between the wits of General Hubert and Mrs. Elizabeth Compton. *Eh bien! Faites votre jeu*, my husband! As it is utterly and altogether impossible that Mrs. O'Donagough should ever trouble my spirit more, except by troubling yours, I shall sit by and watch your manœuvres as composedly as if you were performing a comedy expressly for my amusement. Neither am I in the least afraid of trusting my beloved aunt Betsy in your hands—though I suspect you mean to plague her a little—don't you?"

"A little, perhaps," replied the general, laughing, "and upon my word she deserves

it. She really seems to suppose that I and my race are in danger of being blighted and disgraced for evermore, by the overpowering influence of these Australian cousins. Don't you think she overrates their importance a little, Agnes?"

"Why, yes, I hope she does. But, indeed, Montague, if she goes on in the complimentary strain with them, I cannot answer for my gravity. The surprised stare of the young lady's enormous black eyes, and the comical struggle between gratified vanity and suspicious mistrust in the countenance of my aunt Barnaby are almost irresistible. What will you say to me if I laugh outright? And how on earth are we to keep Compton in order? You know aunt Betsy is in all things considerably too much inclined to charter the vehement exuberance of his saucy animal spirits, and I fear, that if he should perchance take it into his head to amuse himself at the expense of my exotic relatives, she will hail him as an ally a great deal too joyfully. Upon my word, Montague, I think we should

do very wisely if we moved our sea-quarters to East-Bourne, or Hastings."

"And upon my word, Agnes, I am more nearly angry with you for saying so, than I ever was in my life before. Should you really think it wise and reasonable if I were to permit myself and my household to be driven round the country from terror of what the O'Donagough family could do to us? Come, come, Agnes! This craven proposal only proceeds from a little covert inclination to take part with aunt Betsy against me—is it not so?"

"I don't know—I assure you, Montague, I think we shall get into a scrape while you and aunt Betsy are running this tilt together."

"Fear nothing, dearest—for I only mean to prove to the mischievous old lady, that notwithstanding all her predictions, we have run into no danger whatever."

"Well then,—I trust that you will soon succeed, and that the joke will be safely over. But I have staid too long from her. Do you think I had better say anything to her

about Mrs. O'Donagough, or let the subject drop?"

"Decidedly say nothing about them, unless she leads to it herself, and I entreat, if she does this, and perseveres in the same tone of *persiflage*, that you will 'fool her to the top of her bent,' and appear to understand everything she says, literally."

"This will be no easy task, Montague, if she pushes the joke much further. However, 'I will in all my best obey you, sir;' and trust that the influence of my name may enable me to enact the *vrai Agnes* to your satisfaction."

* * * * *

While this conversation took place at one end of the Marine-parade, Mrs. O'Donagough pursued her way in excellent spirits to the other. Miss Patty, who had scarcely ever heard the obnoxious name of aunt Betsy mentioned in her life, had now to listen to a great many very deep and shrewd observations concerning her.

"It is no little matter we have done to day, Patty, I can tell you that," said Mrs. O'Dona-

gough, with an accent, which to the young lady seemed rather mysterious in its solemnity. "Some people say that that little crooked old woman is immensely rich;—if she is—but that's neither here nor there—I won't pretend even to give an opinion upon it,—only this much I will say, that it is perfectly and altogether beyond the reach of belief that General Hubert should let his wife make such a fuss about her if she is not."

"She looks as if she had been buried fifty years, and dug up again," observed the young lady.

"That's a monstrous good description of her, Patty. But don't you let your wit outrun your discretion, darling. If she has scraped and hoarded up some money from what ought to have belonged to my poor dear father, and nobody else, there is no reason under the sun why it shouldn't every farthing come to you. Everybody that ever heard of her knows that she is the most capricious old soul alive, first taking a fancy to one person and then to another. All of a sudden, once, for no reason

in the world, that anybody could find out, she took it into her head to spend, nobody knows how much money, in dressing your cousin Agnes from top to toe, and sending her off miles and miles from home to a fine school. And to my certain knowledge she had never seen the child above once or twice before. I was by when she took the fancy into her head, and I am as sure as sure that it was for no other reason in the world than just because the girl looked pretty when she took off her bonnet and shook back her curls. I remember the stare she gave her, as well as if it was but yesterday. And d'ye think, Patty, I didn't see the stare she gave you to-day? Agnes Willoughby was no more to be compared to you, at the time I speak of, than chalk to cheese, and I do believe in the bottom of my heart, that if we have but wit enough to flatter her up a little, and manage to put you forward well, you will have a better chance now than any of 'em."

"Well, mamma," replied Patty, yawning, "all I have got to say is, that if the old

mummy has got some tin to give, I wish she'd come down with it at once, for I want to have a black silk cloak trimmed with lace like Matilda Perkins's; and if I don't get what she has hoarded soon, I shan't care a farthing about it at all; for I'm sure, when I'm married, I shall expect my husband to shovel out the money whenever I may happen to want it."

"Nonsense, Patty! don't talk so like an idiot," replied her mother. "You are old enough to know better; or if you ain't, I'm sure you have no business with a black silk cloak trimmed with lace. How do you think, child, that you are to get this fine rich husband that is to shovel out such loads of money upon you? I should think you might know without my telling you, that a girl's chance of a good match is doubled and trebled a hundred thousand times over by her having some money herself."

"Money enough to buy nice things, and set her beauty off, of course she ought to have, and it's a sin and a shame if she has not," replied

Patty; "but I don't see what she wants of anything more, if she's handsome."

"Why, then you are not half such a clever girl as I took you for, Miss Martha. Take my word for it, that there is no man but what likes to get money with his wife, if he can catch it."

"You don't mean to say, mama," cried the young lady, colouring as red as scarlet, "you don't mean to say that such a girl as I am, ought to be married for her money?"

"Lor a-mercy, Patty, what a pepper-box you are! I never said any such thing you little fool," replied her mother laughing. "You need not be in such a fright. Nobody can know the value of fine eyes better than I do; my time is not so long gone by, I can tell you, but what I can remember what they are worth. But that's neither here nor there, Patty; the fact is, you must be civil and attentive to this crabbed old lady, and when your father hears what I shall tell him about her, he'll be sharp enough in looking after your behaviour, I'll engage for it."

"Then let him give me a black silk cloak," said Patty; "I'll be hanged if I plague myself to be civil to that little old witch for nothing."

By this time they had reached their own lodgings, and it was with great satisfaction that Mrs. O'Donagough found her husband in solitary possession of the drawing-room, for her mind was full of important matter, and telling Patty that she had better go and call on the Perkinses, she seated herself exactly opposite to her spouse, and informed him of the unexpected interview she had had with her old aunt. She recounted at length the history of the perfect reconciliation which had taken place between them—described the old lady's evident and frankly-expressed admiration for Patty—related the rumours which had reached her before she quitted England, concerning her aunt's accumulated wealth—and finally expressed her conviction that the best and wisest thing they could do, would be to cultivate the acquaintance of the old lady most assiduously.

"I shall say the same, my Barnaby," replied

Mr. Allen O'Donagough, "if I can find out that you are right about the old queen's cash. But you don't seem over clear upon that point, and I have too much promising business upon my hands already, to waste time in running after moonshine. I wonder how the old lady came, whether she staged it, or posted? You did not happen to hear, did you?"

"No, Donny, I did not," replied his wife; "but it would be a capital thing to find out, wouldn't it? It would be as good as a peep into her strong box."

Mr. Allen O'Donagough did not answer, but sat musingly swinging one leg over the arm of his chair for a minute or more, then suddenly starting up, he said, "Let me find you here when I come back, Barnaby; I shall not be long."

Had time been allowed, the lady might have questioned him as to his purpose, but there was not; for before she could say "Stay!" he was out of the room, and in the next moment she heard the house-door close after him.

Though still unrecognised by any former acquaintance, Mr. Allen O'Donagough had fully renewed his intimacy with all the holes and corners, terrestrial and aquatic, with which Brighton, in common with all other watering-places, abounds. To one of them he now made his way, and beckoning to him one of the satellites whom he knew as ever ready to do his bidding for sixpence, he instructed him to repair to the house of General Hubert, and inquire of the domestic who should answer the bell, if he could be so obliging as to tell him where Mrs. Elizabeth Compton's carriage put up.

In less than five minutes after Mr. O'Donagough had pointed out the general's mansion to his agent, the fellow returned to him at his station, in an obscure street close by, and told him that the lady's carriage was at the Wellington Arms. Having honourably paid the promised sixpence, Mr. O'Donagough proceeded to the stables indicated, and there had not only the satisfaction of seeing Mrs. Elizabeth Compton's handsome travelling-

carriage, but also a most respectable-looking domestic, who stood by, evidently to superintend the various cleaning operations that it was undergoing within and without.

Mr. O'Donagough approached and fixed his eye on the lozenge with an air of an experienced herald.

"This is Mrs. Elizabeth Compton's carriage, sir, is it not?" said he, civilly addressing the servant.

"Yes sir," replied the man, touching his hat.

"I hope she is quite well?"

"Quite well, sir, thank you."

"She must be getting old now, good lady. Did she come down post all the way from London to-day?"

"Yes, sir; my mistress travels wonderfully well still. She came post from Exeter to London the other day, without stopping above an hour on the road."

"That is capital, indeed! Good morning."

* * * * *

"Yes, my Barnaby, the game is worth fol-

lowing. Her own carriage—post all the way from Exeter, and a servant that looks as if he might belong to a duke," said Mr. O'Donagough, re-entering his drawing-room, and re-seating himself in the chair he had left about forty minutes before.

"Bless my soul! you don't say so!" exclaimed his wife in return. "What a sly old miser she must have been for years and years, to be sure! But no matter for that, Donny—no matter how the money was scraped together, so as our Patty does but get hold of it. If she does but get half, it would be well worth having, you know. Her own carriage—just think!—post all the way from Exeter. Her own servant—think for a moment, my dear, whether the half of that would not be worth having! and remember, that if she was to die to-morrow, we have just exactly as good a right to it as the Huberts. My Patty, you know, is precisely the self-same relation to her as Agnes. Don't you see?"

"Yes, my dear, I see," replied Mr. Allen O'Donagough; "and a very pretty little sight

it is, there's no doubt about that. All you have got to do is, to keep it in view, and come in at the death if you can."

"Then I will immediately write an invitation to them all to spend the evening here on Wednesday next," said Mrs. O'Donagough.

"Do, my dear," replied her spouse: "and if they come, I assure you I shall think very well of your chance."

Mrs. O'Donagough only gave an intelligent nod in reply, and seating herself at the table, immediately composed the following note:—

"My dearest Agnes,

"I cannot describe to you the pleasure it has given me to see my dear father's own sister again once more, and that, too, in a manner so much more agreeable than upon any former occasion. Thank Providence! my circumstances are such, that I shall never want to be troublesome to her any more in any way; and this must, of course, be a relief to her mind, dear old lady. Will you, my

dearest Agnes, have the kindness to present my most dutiful respects to her, and tell her that I should consider it as the very greatest honour and favour if she would come with you, and the general, and our dear Elizabeth, to pass the evening with us on Wednesday next. I think that, if possible, our sea view is still more beautiful than yours. At least Patty says, that at high-water it beats all the rest of Brighton. Poor dear girl!—she is positively longing to see her great-aunt again! She has been telling her papa, that she never in her whole life saw any old lady that she so much admired, and felt so much inclined to love. Do, my dear Agnes—my own dear sister's only child!—do exert yourself to obtain this great pleasure for us, and believe me, my beloved niece,

"Your ever affectionate aunt,

"MARTHA O'DONAGOUGH."

CHAPTER XVI.

AN APPROVED DESPATCH—AN ESSAY ON TRUTH—PREPARATION—MILITARY TACTICS—AN AFFECTIONATE WELCOME—FAMILY FEELINGS—HOSPITALITY.

THE note of invitation being written, Mrs. O'Donagough rose, walked across the room, and putting it into her husband's hand, said, while she gave him an affectionate pat on the shoulder. "Read that, Donny, and tell me if you don't think I'm good for something!"

Mr. O'Donagough perused the billet with attention, and replied, "Yes, upon my honour you are, Barnaby! And if you carry this through, and get those stiff, formal people here to a regular evening party, you will do an uncommon good thing, and I shall give you more credit for that sort of talent (the most important that a woman can have by the by), than ever I did in my life before."

It was just at this moment, and while Mrs. O'Donagough was still rubbing her hands, and giving by her countenance every indication of "measureless content," that Miss Patty entered the room.

"What have you got there, pap?" she cried gaily jumping forward towards him. "Give it to me, I will see it, that's poz. Mama looks as if she were going to dance for joy about it."

"Give it to her, Donny," said her mother, "and then she will see what is going on."

Patty took the note, and having read it, exclaimed, raising both hands and eyes to heaven, "Well done, mama! If you ain't the greatest liar that ever broke bread I'll be hanged. Do you think the old soul will swallow all this? Lord, papa! when you see her you will be ready to crack, as I was—Love her!—*I* love her! Nasty little withered old weasel!—How can you write such lies, mama?"

"Patty!" replied Mrs. O'Donagough solemnly. "There is one truth which, if you do not know it already, it is time you should. There is no duty more necessary to learn in the state in

which it has pleased Providence to place us, than that we *must* lie, as you vulgarly call it, when it is necessary. A wife and a mother, Patty, has other things to think of, besides just her own conscience and convenience. Of course it is much easier to say the truth out, plump at once, and tell people that you don't like 'em, if you don't.—But I should like to know how that would answer? Never you trouble yourself about my lying, I beg. I will never lie more than it is my bounden duty to do—and I certainly shall never neglect that, for any object."

"Your mother's a pattern, Patty," said Mr. O'Donagough, winking aside at his daughter. And then added more gravely, "I'll tell you what, my beauty, I expect she's got hold of a fine hand of cards just now, and neither you nor I must spoil the playing of them."

"Bless your souls! good people, I don't want to spoil anything," replied Patty, flinging the letter on the table; "only I say, papa, mind one thing—if you expect that I'll palaver these nasty disagreeable people for nothing,

you're mistaken; but if you will give me a black silk *mantelet*, trimmed with lace, just like Matilda Perkins's, I'll engage to do whatever mama wants with this little old mummy of an aunt. The old soul had sense enough to say that I need not kiss her, because I could make better use of my kisses than that, so I needn't cuddle her up, as mama does Mrs. Hubert—and I'm sure I couldn't, without making all her little bones crack, and fall to pieces; but if you will give me the cloak, you'll see how I'll smile, and courtesy, and behave pretty."

"Get away with you," said her father laughing; "you won't leave me a penny in my pocket, with your coaxing ways, if I don't take care. Come, my dear," he added, to his wife, "make haste, seal your note, and send it."

"There's a difficulty about that, Mr. O'Donagough," she replied. "It will be very awkward sending the maid of the house with it. Of course, if they come, we must hire a waiter, and take care to have everything in the very best possible style. That's the only way, depend upon it, to give us a fair chance against

the Huberts. How can I manage, my dear, about sending the note, without their seeing a maid-servant?"

"Give it to me—I'll send it by a fellow that shall look like a groom. That will do I suppose?" said Mr. O'Donagough.

"Delightfully!" replied his wife. And the note was sent.

* * * *

When Mrs. Hubert joined her venerable aunt in her room, she found her in her usual mood, full of interest and affection about the children, Mr. Willoughby, the Stephensons, and all in short, who were objects of interest and affection to Agnes herself; but all trace of *persiflage* was gone, and, as it seemed, all memory of Mrs. O'Donagough with it.

After an hour's pleasant family gossip, they returned again to the drawing-room, where they found the General engaged in reading the London papers, which had just reached him. As if to atone for any petulance she might have shown in their late encounter, Mrs. Compton paused behind his chair as she passed, and lay-

ing her little hand on his shoulder, said "Dear General!—what a pleasure it is to see you al again!"

He understood this as an *amende*, and accepted it. Rising from his chair, he took her hand, kissed it affectionately, and leading her to a sofa, sat down beside her, and entered into a conversation full of kindness and animation on both sides.

In the midst of this a silver salver entered, bearing a note addressed to "Mrs. General Hubert." Agnes took it, and glancing her eye at the direction, laid it, unopened, upon the table.

"The servant waits for an answer," said the footman distinctly.

"Who is that from, Agnes?" said the general.

Mrs. Hubert took up the note again, as if to examine it for his satisfaction, but she coloured as she did so, and both her husband and her aunt at the same moment, felt convinced that it was an *envoi* from Mrs. O'Donagough.

"You need not wait, Philip," said General

Hubert, "I will ring when the answer is ready."

Mrs. Hubert meanwhile read her aunt's affectionate epistle in silence, and then put it into her husband's hand, who rose to receive it.

"This good lady seems bent upon putting your patience to the proof, aunt Betsy," said he, after glancing his eye over the contents. "It is from Mrs. O'Donagough, and contains an invitation for you and for us to an evening party, at her house next week."

"May I know what she says?" demanded the old lady, sedately. General Hubert put the note into her hands. "Alas! General," said she, "I have not my eyes here—will you have the kindness to read it to me?" Agnes could not repress a smile as she watched the countenance of her husband on receiving this request, but there was no escape from the task, and he read aloud the affectionate effusion with perfect gravity, and very sufficient distinctness. The eye of Agnes was fixed upon her aunt as he proceeded. At first her countenance expressed a very natural inclination to smile,

in which Mrs. Hubert frankly joined, feeling delighted that all mystification on the subject seemed at an end; but ere the lecture was completed, the mischievous little black eyes were soberly fixed on the carpet, the mouth pursed up in affected gravity, and every feature indicating a relapse into the same whimsical mood which had seized upon her on learning the arrival of her niece in England.

"I presume we shall all be of one mind as to the answer to this epistle?" said General Hubert, throwing the note upon the table.

"Indeed I hope so," replied Mrs. Compton, meekly. The General did not quite like the accent, and looking in her face, read there, plainly enough, her renewed purpose of teasing him. Had he at that moment wisely determined to lay down his arms, confess himself exceedingly annoyed at the result of his own indiscretion, and shown himself inclined to allow that they should have done better had they followed her advice, Mrs. Compton would have given him no further trouble, they would all have acted in concert, and the

O'Donagough plague would have been stayed. Unfortunately, however, such wisdom did not at the moment suit his humour, and he met her renewed banter in a tone as foreign from sincerity as her own.

"Is the answer to be no, or yes?" said he.

"Surely we cannot refuse such an invitation as that?" said the old lady, in a voice which seemed to deprecate the General's suspected harshness of purpose. "I am quite sure that if you dream of doing so, it can be only on my account, and I cannot think of permitting it. Poor lady! how affectionately she writes. You really do seem, my dear Agnes, to have conquered, by your incessant kindness, all the little asperities of her character. And that noble-looking young lady her daughter, too! What a fond attaching sort of person she must be! Do, General Hubert, have the kindness to read over again that passage in which Mrs. O'Donagough expresses the young lady's feelings towards me."

General Hubert cast a look upon his wife,

half frowning, half laughing, and held out his hand again for the letter. But Agnes shook her head. Notwithstanding her strong affection for the old lady, she did not quite approve the species of discipline she was bestowing upon her husband, and instead of giving back Mrs. O'Donagough's epistle, she opened it, and appeared to be pondering upon its contents.

"You cannot be in earnest, aunt Betsy," said she, "in talking of accepting this invitation. I am sure you would find an evening so spent intolerably tedious."

"Indeed, Agnes, you do not do me justice," replied Mrs. Compton. "The time has been certainly when I felt less kindly disposed to Mrs. O'Donagough than yourself and the General: nay, so far did I carry my prejudice against her, that I fancied there might be something like imprudence in renewing an intercourse which circumstances had so completely interrupted. I confess all this. But you are not to suppose me obstinate in error to such a degree as to refuse yielding my own

judgment to that of General Hubert. And as to my finding the evening tedious, I am quite certain that I shall be more pleased and amused by it than anybody."

"Pray, Agnes, let your aunt do as she likes," said General Hubert. "Write, my love, will you, and say that you accept the invitation."

This was carrying the jest, if jest it might be called, considerably farther than Mrs. Hubert approved; and after the pause of a moment she determined upon venturing to address a remonstrance to both the parties, who thus, by the indulgence of a species of competition in wilfulness, half jest, half earnest, were, as she thought, running a great risk of getting into a scrape which would be equally disagreeable to both. But as she raised her head to speak, she encountered the eyes of her husband, who, evidently suspecting her purpose, appeared determined to prevent it by giving her a look that recalled at once his injunctions on the subject, and her own promise to comply with them.

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"Here is your desk, Agnes," he said; "do not keep the servant longer waiting."

Agnes took paper and a pen, but again she paused ere she used them. "Are you really in earnest, my dear aunt, in saying that you intend to pass an evening with Mrs. O'Donagough?" said she.

"Pray, Agnes, do not doubt my word when I have given it to you," replied Mrs. Compton, very gravely. So a civil note, accepting the invitation, was written and despatched.

The manner of its reception very clearly proved its importance. Mr. O'Donagough himself indeed said but little, but that little was impressive. "General Hubert and his family are then actually coming to pass the evening here on your invitation, my wife?" said he. "Go on as you have begun, my Barnaby, and I may have to buy a court-dress for you yet."

It was not from seeing any improbability of the event predicted that Mrs. O'Donagough paid little attention to the prediction at that moment; on the contrary, her feelings might

rather be expressed by the French phrase, *Ça va, sans mot dire*—but, gaily snapping her fingers, she only replied, "Let me alone, Donny, and you'll see sights before we've done."

Having uttered these sibylline words, Mrs. O'Donagough left the room, and sought, as all ladies under such circumstances do, to get together a female committee for the despatch of business. More rapidly than most persons of her age and size could have performed the feat, she descended to the parlour of the Miss Perkinses, and fortunately found them, together with Patty, in full enjoyment of the open window and the telescope; had the room been unoccupied, not all Mrs. O'Donagough's triumphant feelings would have saved her from a state of positive suffering, for the same delightful exhilaration of spirits which then made her eloquent, would have swelled her bosom almost to bursting, had she found no friends to share it.

She entered with the important note open in her hand. "So! here you are, my dear

girls! I'm monstrous glad I have found you, for I have fifty things to say. In the first place, my dear Miss Perkinses, I hope you have no engagement for Wednesday evening next, for I want you to pass it with us."

"Oh! my dear madam," replied the elder sister, "I am sure your kindness and hospitality know no bounds. We shall be most happy to wait upon you."

"If I had fifty engagements," said Miss Matilda, "you may depend upon it I should not keep one of them, if you asked me the same evening.—Should I, Patty?" she said, affectionately squeezing the arm of Miss O'Donagough, which rested upon hers.

"You are a dear, good girl, Matilda," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, with chuckling good-humour; "and this time I flatter myself I shall give you a party worth having. I know you admire both General Hubert and his lady, and they will be with us on Wednesday."

Not all Mrs. O'Donagough's efforts to assume a tone of *nonchalance*, as she said this could prevent a degree of lisping affectation

from pervading her delivery of the important names, but the two Miss Perkinses were too much excited to remark it.

"You don't say so!" honestly exclaimed the elder, without attempting to disguise either her surprise or pleasure. "This *is* kind, ma'am, indeed! I heard somebody say at the library that they were going to meet them at the Pavilion next week. Isn't it kind to ask us, Matilda?"

"Mrs. O'Donagough is always kind," replied the younger, with great decorum, "and I shall have much pleasure in meeting the General and his lady, because I really admire them. One meets such multitudes of people that visit at the Pavilion, that it is not that circumstance which strikes me. But the near relations of friends I value so greatly cannot but be interesting to me."

"That's just like you, Matilda," replied the fond aunt of Mrs. Hubert; "and you will like too, I know, and for the same kind reason, to meet my rich old aunt, as well as my elegant niece. This old lady, Mrs. Elizabeth Comp-

ton, is not, I promise you, the least important personage of the party. She is the maiden sister of my late dear father, is as rich as a Jew, and looks, as I have good reason to believe, with rather a partial eye on my saucy Patty, here."

"Oh! you dear, lucky girl!" cried the affectionate Matilda, throwing her arms round her young friend's neck—"How delighted I am to hear it!"

"Lord! what does money signify, Matilda, to a girl that's young and handsome? If you think that I mean to be married for my money, you're out, I can tell you. I should have thought you had known better than that."

"Married for your money, indeed! What nonsense! Who ever thought of that?" replied Miss Matilda, playfully shoving the buxom Patty within sight of her own image in the glass; "but money's money for all that, my sweet girl."

"And so it is, Matilda!" cried Mrs. O'Donagough, approvingly, "and you can't do better than make Patty understand what that

means. But now, my dear girls, we must come to business. Do you know I have been thinking that it would be better to have the refreshments down here, if you'll lend us the room?"

To this proposal the two sisters replied together, with such uniformity of accent, thought, and feeling, that it seemed as if one voice only uttered the joyful "Oh dear yes! we shall be *so* delighted!" which followed it.

"Well then, my dears, that's settled. And now I must inquire about a nice respectable-looking man to wait. You don't happen, I suppose, to know of such a one, do you?"

"I am quite sure I know where you can hear of one," replied Miss Perkins; "for I saw a notice up at a baker's shop in one of the cross streets; I can't exactly recollect where; but I don't doubt that I could find it."

"What a dear clever creature you are!" cried Mrs. O'Donagough, laying her two heavy hands on the slender arms of Miss Perkins; "then I shall leave that job to you. Next, there's the wax candles to be thought of. We must get Mrs. Bates to let us have all the lamps and

candlesticks she has got. I see you have branches to that pretty convex mirror over the sideboard; they will make the room look very elegant: but then there's the ice to be ordered, and cakes, and coffee, and cream. My poor head has work enough, hasn't it? That's the worst, you see, of giving parties in a lodging house, without one's own servants and things about one. Ah me! my dears, if you had known me at Silverton Park during the time of my first marriage with poor dear Mr. Barnaby, you would wonder to see me make such a fuss as this about receiving a visit from my own nearest relations! But a lodging-house is but a lodging-house after all: and I need not tell you that General Hubert is a high and mighty sort of personage, for that you can see at a glance."

Nothing could more clearly show the elevated state of Mrs. O'Donagough's spirits than this allusion to her long-forgotten park at Silverton. The name of that beloved domain had never passed her lips from the hour she had dwelt upon its beauties to Major Allen, during the days of their Clifton loves, to the

present. The Miss Perkinses, however, "caught it ere it fell to ground," and it added much to the solidity of Mrs. O'Donagough's greatness in their estimation.

Having settled with her female friends all they were to do for her, lugged about the tables and chairs a little, in order to rehearse the arrangements for Wednesday, and given Patty a hint as to the danger of straining her eyes, by a too incessant use of the darling telescope, Mrs. O'Donagough bustled up stairs again, and approaching her husband with a coaxing, but not doubting demeanour, told him that she had settled everything with the dear Perkinses about having their room, and all other things they were to aid her in, and that she was come now for his share of the job.

"And what's that to be?" he demanded, instinctively putting his hand upon the pocket where his money was deposited.

"Yes, Donny," said the lady, laughing, "that's it; at least that's one part of what I want. I will take care, my dear, that everything shall be in excellent style, and I will only

trouble you for two articles—money and officers. I dare say the General plays a good rubber,—all officers do, you know. But at any rate we must have some red-coats to make us look gay."

Her husband looked up at her as she spoke, with a queer sort of expression, that she could by no means understand. However, she was not very anxious for an interpretation of it, when he said, "And how much money do you want, my dear?" She made her demand, which was complied with instantly, without an observation; a style of doing business so novel and agreeable, that she immediately left the room in a most enviable state of spirits, to set off on a shopping expedition, without waiting for his answer to her second demand.

It was not, therefore, till the very day of the party had arrived, that she received a bit of information from her husband, which greatly lessened her anticipations of gaiety for the evening.

While enjoying a plate of her favourite prawns for breakfast, Mrs. O'Donagough sud-

denly exclaimed, "By-the-by, Donny, I am by no means sure that Foxcroft and Dartmore, and Willis, will be over-well pleased with having nothing but ice and cakes to eat after their rubber. I suspect that they'll miss their lobster salad and porter, and I'm sure I shall. What d'ye say to having a table laid in the corner of the dining-room, with about half a dozen knives and forks, for those that like something substantial? And then, you know, if the Huberts go tolerably early, which they'll be sure to do, on account of that little creaky thing aunt Betsy, you can bring your old friends up stairs again, for another rubber and a glass of toddy."

"Have you done breakfast, Patty?" demanded Mr. O'Donagough.

"All but this one prawn," replied the young lady, taking a solitary straggler that remained in the dish.

"Well, then, go and take a look-out with the glass, and see if the French steamer is in sight."

This errand was of a nature to ensure obedience, and Patty was out of the room in a moment.

"I say! Mrs. O'Donagough, I have got a word or two for your private ear, so sit still a minute, if you please," said the husband.

"Mercy on me! what's the matter?" replied the wife, somewhat startled both by the words and manner.

"Nothing at all is the matter, unless you make a fool of yourself, and I think you know better than that."

"I think so too," rejoined the lady, with rather a heightened colour, "but I wish you'd speak out."

"Don't be afraid, I'll speak out fast enough. You told me the other day that I was to get officers for your party to-night, and then you flew off in such a fuss, that I had no time to say anything in answer. But it's time to tell you now, that you can have no officers to-night, except the high and mighty Lieutenant-General Hubert, Colonel of the * * * regiment of Dragoons."

"And why not, I should like to know? Good gracious, O'Donagough! how very dull it will be!"

"It had better be dull than dangerous, Mrs. O'Donagough."

"Dangerous!" reiterated his wife. "What on earth do you mean?"

"I mean, my dear, that if I hope to do any good from the singular bit of luck which has brought me into kindred and acquaintance with Lieutenant-General Hubert, I must not invite Messrs. Foxcroft, Dartmore, and Willis, to meet him."

"Lord, Donny! Do you suppose he is such a fool as to expect people will never ask any body but generals to drink tea with him?"

"Not exactly that, Mrs. O'Donagough. But he is a sort of man that one never invites to meet—sporting gentlemen, who live by their wits."

"I am sure it is a shame then, that you should invite such people here at all. How do you know that some of 'em may not fall in love with Patty, some day, and a pretty match that would make, wouldn't it?"

"I must be doing business, Mrs. O'Donagough, let me be where I will; and you ought

to know that, I should think, by this time. I'll take care that none, exactly of that sort, shall marry Patty, let them fall as much in love with her as they will; and remember now, and always if you please, that your business is not to ask questions about my company. I shall never give lobster salads to any body that I can't make pay for them, neither shall I ever spoil a great game by mixing it up with a little one. People starting with less advantage than I do now, have managed to line their own purses, and get a peer for a daughter into the bargain. I see no reason why I may not do the same. But it won't come by inviting size-ace together to a tea party."

"It is a monstrous bore," said Mrs. O'Donagough, "but I suppose you know best."

"Probably, my dear," replied her spouse. "Make yourself and your girl, and your room, as fine as you will; and have your Miss Perkinses to help, if you like it. No great harm can come of that. They are not handsome enough to have any danger in them. But for my playfellows, let me keep them in the back-

ground when I think fit, and make no remarks upon it. Do as I would have you, and when you get to London you shall be rewarded for it."

Though Mr. Allen O'Donagough did know *best*, his lady was not so ignorant as to be very greatly astonished at what she had heard, and being, as all the world allowed, a very sensible woman, she made the best of it—hinting to the Miss Perkinses, with a judicious touch of mystery, that General Hubert was known, by those who were nearly connected and intimate with him, to have a multitude of whims, one of which was, that he had a great dislike to associate with any but field-officers. Patty stormed at hearing this, and declared that she wished all the Huberts, man, woman, and child, were at the bottom of the sea; but the Miss Perkinses knew better than to talk such nonsense, and even Miss Matilda felt capable of valuing the dignity of the association, though she was not insensible to the privations it brought with it.

General Hubert's family, meanwhile, were

not unmindful of the threatened festivity, though not quite so much occupied thereby as the hospitable projectors of it. The General himself was a little chafed at finding that he was manœuvred into a scrape. But he managed extremely well to keep this feeling hid. His sweet wife suffered herself to be led, satisfied that she could not go very wrong if led by him. And Mrs. Compton quietly enjoyed the conviction that she should soon bring General Hubert to confess there was more wisdom in keeping clear of a Mrs. Barnaby, than in braving her approach, and trusting to dignity and skilful tactics to render her harmless.

That she was in a fair way to achieve this desirable end, there was no doubt, and it might have been as well if the venerable plotter had rested satisfied with what she had already done to ensure it. But she had no intention of letting the gentleman off so easily. She had not forgotten the many quizzings she had brought upon herself during the last dozen years, by warning him that half the globe did not afford

distance sufficient to render intercourse and communion with a Barnaby safe. She remembered his jestings, gentle though they were, upon the circulating library, as a source of knowledge respecting the conduct of human life; and the result of all these reminiscences was a determination to push a little further the system she had so ably begun. Some excuse for the old lady's persevering mystifications, may be found, perhaps, in the skill and pertinacity by which he, for whose especial advantage they were set in action, concealed their effect upon him.

"Do all the dear children go with us to-night?" said the old lady, looking round upon the assembled family, on the morning of the eventful Wednesday.

"Not any of them, I believe," replied Agnes, quietly.

"Surely you do not mean that, my dear? Is the General growing cautious already? Is it he who objects to the young people's being introduced to their cousin?"

"No, indeed!" said General Hubert, turn-

ing over the mighty pages of the *Times* newspaper with a little *fracas*. "No, indeed, Mrs. Compton, I have not interfered on the important subject."

"Emily has not made her appearance at any evening parties as yet," said Mrs. Hubert, smiling.

"But Elizabeth is just the same age as her cousin," observed the old lady, with an innocent air of pleading for indulgence. "I do hope you will let her go; unless, indeed, General Hubert sees any objection to it."

The General turned over another page of his noisy newspaper, but said nothing.

"Elizabeth may go if she likes it," replied Agnes.

"I would rather not go, mama, if you please," said the young lady, slightly colouring.

"Why not, my dear?" inquired Mrs. Compton, holding out her hand to invite the recusant to her side.

Elizabeth went to her readily, and quite unconscious of the underplot that was going on, said very frankly,

"Don't advise mama to take me, Aunt Compton, because I had a great deal rather stay at home with Emily."

The old lady kissed her cordially, and said, "You will feel a little shy with your cousin at first, my dear, I dare say; perhaps, indeed, it will take some time before you are thoroughly used to her. However, as you will have so many nice opportunities when you are all living together in London, I dare say your mama and papa will let you remain with your sister this evening. We must have Compton with us, however. I hope he does not intend to forsake the old aunt who eloped with him?"

"I will go with you all the world over, aunt Betsy!" replied the youth, gaily. "Besides, I am exceedingly anxious to see my new cousin."

At about half-past eight o'clock in the evening, General and Mrs. Hubert, their son, and venerable great-aunt, drove to the residence of Mr. and Mrs. O'Donagough on the East Cliff. The moment in which their carriage stopped at the door, was a happy one for the five persons

assembled in the drawing-room; for during the last hour, a constantly increasing fever of expectation had been tormenting them all.

"Well, now I hope you will be contented, mama!" cried Patty, from her station at the window. "One, two, three, four of 'em.—There's no Miss Elizabeth though, but such a beautiful tall young man! I do believe it is the Lord William I told you of, Matilda, only he is out of regimentals. It *is* good-natured of them to bring him, at any rate; and now," she added, in the whisper which so often marked their mutual affection and confidence, "now I shan't care three straws about Foxcroft and Willis—shall you?"

Ere the question could be fully answered, the "nice respectable waiter," threw wide the drawing-room door, and announced the guests.

Mrs. O'Donagough stood within six feet of it, radiant in crimson satin and blonde; and, as usual, ready to envelope her "darling Agnes" in an embrace, overflowing with lappets and love. Behind her, in single file, were stationed—first her daughter, in a transparent

dress of rose colour, over shining white calico; her profuse black ringlets dropping from all parts of her head, her large eyes flashing their eager rays through the doorway to light upon the expected lord, and her bright complexion very unnecessarily in its glowing splendour, by a slight touch of her mama's rouge. Next appeared Miss Matilda Perkins, a very model for *careful dressers.* Not a pin but did its duty well; not a plait nor a pucker but fulfilled the wearer's will,—not a hair that produced not the effect of two. The more retiring elder sister was modestly sheltered behind her, conscious, perhaps, that the bracing energies of hope having failed her, the patience necessary for an effective past forty toilet, had failed her too, and that she was not sufficiently *fait à peindre* to appear in the foreground. Behind Miss Perkins, senior, stood Mr. Allen O'Donagough, sleek and sober in new broad-cloth, and a well-trimmed wig.

Mrs. Compton, and her niece Agnes, entered arm-in-arm, an arrangement which seemed to puzzle Mrs. O'Donagough, for she could not

conveniently embrace them both together; and being particularly desirous that the Misses Perkins should see the elegant Mrs. General Hubert enfolded in her arms, she stood for half an instant, uncertain how to proceed. But a movement of Mr. O'Donagough favoured her purpose; for feeling himself rather too much thrown into the background by the two file of Perkinses, he made an active movement forward, and bowing profoundly, ventured to protrude a welcoming hand towards the ladies; whereupon, Mrs. Compton withdrew her arm from that of Agnes, and suddenly dropped into a chair, as if too much fatigued to stand longer; being prepared, as it should seem, to go all lengths for the promotion of her project, short of actually touching her Australian relatives.

The moment Mrs. Hubert stood alone, Mrs. O'Donagough pushed aside her husband's extended hand without ceremony, and with a movement much too sudden to be either foreseen or resisted, once more enclosed her in a fond embrace, which lasted so long, as to make Miss Perkins exclaim in a whisper to Mr.

O'Donagough, "Dear me! What a pleasure it is to witness such affection! Your lady perfectly dotes upon her niece, and I'm sure no wonder!"

Released at last, Mrs. Hubert moved on, shaking hands with Patty, and bowing to her father. But there was still much bustling ceremony to go through; the two Miss Perkinses were to be introduced, and General Hubert respectfully, affectionately, and gracefully welcomed. This was all admirably accomplished by Mrs. O'Donagough; a low courtesy, a smiling pressure of the hand, and a sort of swinging bow, by which she indicated to him an arm-chair at the upper end of the room as his place, completed the tripartite operation. But when she found herself face to face with the young Compton, she was puzzled. Who, or what he was, she could by no means conjecture; his remarkable height and manly appearance, naturally enough prevented her from guessing that he was the son of Agnes; so having smiled upon him very graciously, and then recollecting who brought

him there, turned round again and made him a courtesy, she set about insisting upon it that Mrs. Compton should change her place from the chair to the sofa; but the active old lady soon cut short her energetic pleadings by so rapidly making the movement she suggested, as to leave her suspended in the very middle of her "Indeed and indeed—"

It can hardly be denied, I believe, that when a party of ladies and gentlemen are in a position from any cause embarrassing, the gentlemen are more awkward than the ladies in their manner of enduring it. Mrs. Hubert ceased to feel *embarrassée de sa personne* as soon as she had released it from the encircling arms of her aunt. Mrs. Compton, from the moment she had seated herself, began to enjoy the whole scene. Patty could be at no loss where or how to look from the moment Compton Hubert entered the room; the Miss Perkinses, each in her own way, were looking just as they ought to do; and Mrs. O'Donagough was much too fully occupied in the expression of her family feelings to be conscious of any

awkwardness at all. But General Hubert held his hat in his hand less gracefully, perhaps, than he had ever held it before; and Mr. O'Donagough would willingly have compounded for misdealing three times at his next batch of whist, could he have obtained thereby the ower of addressing three sentences to the General with a tolerable appearance of ease.

The first decisive change in this state of things, was produced by Mrs. Compton's saying in her gay clear voice, "Pray, Mrs. Hubert, have you remembered to introduce your son Compton to your aunt Barnaby?—I beg pardon, I mean O'Donagough." The old lady probably expected to produce some picturesque effects by thus throwing a new light upon the circle; but it is probable that the result was even greater than she anticipated. No sooner did Mrs. O'Donagough catch her words, than starting from her seat, her hands clasped, her head thrown forward, and her eager eyes advancing farther still, she rushed towards the startled young man; and laying her hands heavily on his head, as if to bestow her

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and her grand relati[illegible]*

blessing, began parting and pushing back his clustering curls, in order to enable her, as she said, to examine the features so naturally, and so inexpressibly dear to her heart. As she thus held the youth imprisoned, gazing the while into his forcibly up-turned face, she discovered that he was strikingly like every member she had ever known of his mother's maternal ancestors; and as she named them all in succession, she impressed a fervent kiss upon his brow, in honour of each individual of the catalogue. The young man became exceedingly red, and when at length released, the manner in which he shook his handsome head, and set himself to rights again, had something so irresistibly ludicrous in it, that even the vexed General indulged in a smile, and his mother laughed outright.

"Glorious creature!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough, as soon as she had recovered her breath. "Good heaven, what a face! Patty, come to me my child. This is the first male descendant of my beloved father that I have ever seen. Dear blessed spirit! how his heart

would have rejoiced to look upon him! Give your hand to your young cousin Compton. I rejoice that his name is Compton—my own dear maiden name! Take her hand, Compton, and remember that *your* great-grandfather and *her* grandfather were the same."

Compton Hubert was, perhaps, as saucy a student of fifteen, as Sandhurst ever sent forth; a peculiarity of temperament considerably increased by the unlimited indulgence of his aunt Betsy, the principal object of whose life had been, from the hour that he first gave indications of having a will of his own, to indulge that will in every possible way. She was, unluckily, but too able to perform this, by the pertinacity with which General Hubert had resisted all her efforts to endow Agnes with her wealth during her own life; after long battling, this point had been settled according to his will, leaving her at liberty to spoil his second son, who, before his birth, was promised to her as her heir, to her heart's content. Some counteracting influence was of course found in the good sense of his parents when

he was with them, and that he was in truth, a fine, frank-hearted, generous fellow, can no more be denied, than that he was *effronté* as a page, when occasion permitted.

It so happened, that exactly at the moment when Mrs. O'Donagough was so pathetically entreating him to take his buxom cousin by the hand. the lad caught his aunt Compton's keen twinkling black eye fixed upon him. It would not be easy to say what it was he read there which encouraged the perpetration of such audacity, but certain it is, that instead of taking the young lady's hand, as requested, he suddenly threw his arms round her neck, and kissed her vehemently.

Mrs. Compton drew out her pocket-handkerchief, and its close application to her face, prevented the possibility of ascertaining whether she laughed or frowned. Mrs. Hubert looked as grave as she could; the General exclaimed almost unconsciously, "Compton!" Mr. O'Donagough grinned; Mrs. O'Donagough looked on with undisguised rapture, crossing her arms upon her own bosom, with a sort of tender

pressure that seemed to indicate that in her heart she embraced them both. The Miss Perkinses looked, turned away their heads, and looked again; while Patty herself glowed, and pouted, and pushed, and laughed, and finally, when the young gentleman withdrew his arms, gave him a look which any spinsters, less devotedly attached to her than the Miss Perkinses, might have interpreted into a challenge to repeat the attack at the first favourable opportunity.

This little interlude produced an excellent effect on the spirits of most of the party; the general and his lady, indeed, might have felt inclined, had the thing been possible, to remove themselves and their son elsewhere; but the old lady was decidedly pleased by the adventure, nothing doubting that such and such-like occurrences, would speedily bring General Hubert to the state of contrition in which she was determined to see him.

Mrs. O'Donagough immediately felt herself not only the great-aunt *in esse*, but the mother-in-law *in posse*, of the young gentleman; while

her calculating husband could not but see very substantial hopes of familiar companionship from such a beginning. The Miss Perkinses naturally felt themselves more at their ease in a little party so affectionately intimate together, and Patty snapped her fingers in her heart at all the Lord Williams in the garrison; though at the same time, her faithful lover Jack caused her secretly to breathe a reservation in his favour, which, if interpreted, would have shown that she still intended to marry him, if he asked her.

"Ring the bell, Mr. O'D., will you? and let us have some tea and coffee. These hot evenings make one long for one's tea always, don't they Matilda?" said Mrs. O'Donagough, giving the young lady she addressed a sidelong look of triumph and delight, as she passed before her to resume her station near the sofa on which the old lady and Agnes were sitting.

The respectable waiter soon made his appearance, and laboured round and round the room, with coffee, tea, cakes, and bread and butter, without intermission, for the space of

one hour; the conversation, meanwhile, being carried on chiefly between Mrs. O'Donagough and Mrs. Hubert, and consisting almost entirely of questions and answers concerning Mr. Willoughby's state of health, habits, residence, and pursuits—the number, fatness, leanness, shortness, and tallness, of Mr. Frederic Stephenson's children, and of the constant longing, from which Mrs. O'Donagough had suffered during the whole of her residence abroad, to know all particulars respecting every relation and connexion which Mrs. Hubert had upon earth, who must ever be, as she declared, more interesting to her than all the rest of the world beside.

By the time the persevering waiter had completed the last round of cake and bread-and-butter which he considered necessary, the recently smuggled French clock on the chimney-piece, being in excellent repair, audibly pronounced ten warnings of the progressive, though not always rapid, march of time. Several of the party counted the strokes, and Mrs. Hubert was one of them.

"I think the carriage must be here, General," said she, looking expressively at her husband; "we are always early," she added, turning to Mrs. O'Donagough, "when my aunt Compton is with us."

"Good gracious, my dear Agnes!" she replied, in considerable agitation; "you won't be so cruel as to think of going yet? You will positively break our hearts if you go away without ice, or oranges, or anything. Ring the bell, Mr. O'D., if you please."

Mr. O'Donagough did so, sharply. The respectable waiter had not yet reached the bottom of the stairs, so the summons was answered with as little delay as his weariness would permit.

"Let the dining-parlour be ready for us *directly*, Potts," said Mrs. O'Donagough, very impressively; and then rising from her chair, she made her way by a brisk movement to the door, in time to reach him as he was passing through it, and whispered in his ear, audibly only to himself and Compton Hubert, who was carrying on a muttered tittering conver-

sation with Patty, near it, "Don't forget to light the wax candles by the mirror, and let us know the minute it is all ready."

The interval which intervened before this announcement was made, certainly appeared a very long one, but it came at last; upon which, Mr. O'Donagough, according to previous orders, often reiterated, approached the sofa, and "louting low," offered his arm to Mrs. Elizabeth Compton.

"You are very obliging, sir," said the old lady briskly; "but General Hubert is always kind enough to take care of *me*."

Thus called upon, the General drew near, and took the mischievous old woman under his protection, supporting her, as usual, very carefully, but certainly feeling a little provoked with her as the cause of all he had been enduring for the last hundred and twenty-three minutes.

Thus rebuffed, Mr. Allen O'Donagough next proffered his attentions to Mrs. Hubert, who accepted them, unconscious that she took the same arm, from which she had shrunk with so

much terror some few years before at Clifton —the gentleman, however, remembered it, and laughed inwardly; well-pleased at the hocus-pocus sort of change his skill and fortune had jointly brought about. Then came the mistress of the *fête*, the gentle Miss Perkinses following after, not sorry, certainly (though deeply impressed with the honour they had enjoyed), that the period of its duration was drawing to a close, and not unmindful that, however long that period had appeared, the time which should follow, through which the ennobling recollection of it must last, would be the longer still. The procession was closed by Patty and her cousin Compton, the intimacy between them being greatly increased by the young lady's placing her hand upon the banister for a slide, and exclaiming,

"Now then! which will be down first?"

On reaching the bottom of the stairs, Mrs. Compton forgetting, or pretending to forget that there was anything more to be done, walked briskly on towards the door of the house, at which a servant of General Hubert's

was stationed; but Mrs. O'Donagough, on seeing her pass the open door of Miss Perkins's parlour, heedless of the radiant light that issued thence, or of the waiter who stood beside the entrance, doing all that man could do, save laying his hands upon her, to give her notice that she was to enter there; on seeing this, Mrs. O'Donagough pushed past her husband and Mrs. Hubert, and with almost panting agitation implored aunt Betsy and the General, to come into the refreshment-room, and eat some ice.

The necessity of compliance was so evident, that General Hubert immediately turned round, though the little hand which rested on his arm was *almost* withdrawn on his doing so. But, apparently, the old lady recollected herself, and felt aware that she was not performing well the part she had undertaken; for on entering the parlour, she immediately seated herself at the table, accepted everything that was offered to her, placing one thing aside, as soon as another came, and thus, though tasting nothing, setting an example of great activity.

The eldest Miss Perkins ventured to seat herself beside her, obligingly offering her services to procure whatever she might wish to take, which Mrs. Compton replied to, by saying, "You are *very* kind, ma'am;" but when the worthy Louisa perceived that ice, orange, custard, and cake, were successively accepted, and successively placed aside, she could resist no longer, and gently ejaculated,

"Dear me, ma'am, everything is so nice, yet you eat nothing!"

"I never taste anything after a six o'clock dinner, ma'am, excepting a glass of cold water," replied the old lady very civilly, but still continuing to extend her hand to everything that was offered to her. This appearance of occupation on her part, certainly kept the party together considerably longer than would have been the case without it; but at length she turned herself completely round to General Hubert, who stood behind her, and said, in her gayest, clearest accents, "Now then, General, I think we may go."

This proposition now appeared too reason-

able for any further opposition; Mrs. Hubert had taken an ice, Compton had fed his cousin Patty with two, the General had swallowed a mouthful of execrable wine with his host, and the old lady had evidently done all she intended to do. Shawls, therefore, were sought and found, hands were shaken, "Coming out," was pronounced by Mrs. Hubert's footman from the door, and the party drove off.

The only words uttered among them *en route* were, "I fear you must be very tired, my dear aunt," from Mrs. Hubert; and, "Not the least in the world; quite the contrary," in reply, from Mrs. Compton.

CHAPTER XVII.

SPLENDOUR SUCCEEDED BY ENJOYMENT—AN IMPORTANT ARRIVAL—AN UNEXPECTED VISIT—MORE FAMILY FEELINGS—THE MISCHIEF OF A YOUNG WOMAN, ADDED TO THAT OF AN OLD ONE—ITS CONSEQUENCES.

WHATEVER might have been the degree of enjoyment produced by Mrs. O'Donagough's party, whilst the whole company remained together, it certainly ended in unmixed satisfaction to those who remained after General Hubert's carriage drove off. Mr. O'Donagough's feeling of enjoyment probably arose in a considerable degree from knowing that the thing was over. The Miss Perkinses, cordially pressed to fall to upon the ices (which no degree of skill could preserve), not only luxuriated in their dulcet coolness, but in all the pride of having passed the evening in such society, and

all the relief produced by its having departed. But the happiness of Mrs. O'Donagough and Patty was of a more substantial kind; they, indeed, also eat ice, and were not insensible to the delight of pulling off their gloves, and "feeling easy," as they all designated their present state of enjoyment; but beyond this, both mother and daughter contemplated results the most lasting and important from the events of the evening. Mrs. O'Donagough determined to be very cautious and diplomatic, and to "say nothing to nobody;" but she also determined that her own daughter should come to as great honour as the daughter of her sister, and marry a Hubert—unless she could do something better.

Patty, who looked perfectly intoxicated with delight, as she meditated on all that passed between herself and her cousin, came exactly to the same conclusion; the only difference being, that her reservation was in favour of Jack, while that of her mama had reference to any lords who might chance to fall in her way.

The Hubert party said very little to each other about the visit, in any way. Perhaps Mrs. Compton would have thought she had done enough to punish her dearly-beloved General, for all the pertinacy he had shown in making light of her prophecies, had he but uttered one single word indicative of dislike to the O'Donagough race in general, or to any individual among them in particular. But he said not that word. Agnes feared to lead to the subject, lest the species of covert warfare, which she perceived to be still going on between her husband and her aunt, might be excited thereby; and as for Compton, feeling conscious that he had been superabundantly impertinent, he secretly rejoiced that the adventures of the evening seemed to lie under an interdict which rendered all allusion to them impossible. His sister Elizabeth, indeed, found an opportunity to ask, when they were alone together, what he thought of their Australian cousin, and he replied by giving her just such a description of the evening as might have been expected from so saucy a personage.

Several excursions on sea and land immediately followed, during which the O'Donagoughs were, in truth, very nearly forgotten.

It was exactly one week after Mrs. O'Donagough's party, at half-past five o'clock in the afternoon, that Mr. and Mrs. O'Donagough, Miss Patty, the two Miss Perkinses, and Lieutenant Dartmore, being all seated very comfortably at dinner in the drawing-room, were startled, and as it were, dragged involuntarily from the table to the windows, by the most tremendous clatter upon the pavement that it was well possible for horses and carriages to make.

"Who in the world are these?" cried Miss Matilda to Lieutenant Dartmore, beside whom she was so lucky as to be placed. "Three carriages and four, and two outriders; mercy, what a dust! Liveries green and gold—well! I should like to know who they are!"

"Stop a moment! I think I can tell you," replied the Lieutenant, protruding his person, almost at the risk of his life through the open window, in order to obtain the information

required. "Yes, I thought so; I remember the arms because of the crest—it's the Stephensons—they are first-rate dashers, I promise you. We had them here last autumn, and they made the whole place alive."

"Stephensons! what Stephensons?" demanded Mrs. O'Donagough, in a tone of authority. "Tell me, Captain Dartmore, all you know about them, I entreat you. I have an interest in that name which nobody else in company can have—except, indeed, my own daughter. Do you mean Frederic Stephenson, brother of Sir Edward?"

"Yes, ma'am; those are his carriages, I give you my word. Everybody knew the set-out last year; there was never a day that they were not making parties or picnics, or something or other. Several of our officers were always invited when they had dancing. Their arrival will make a sensation through the whole town."

"Gracious heaven! was ever anything so fortunate! Now, Mr. O'Donagough, I shall have the pleasure of introducing you to some

more of my connexions. You must remember Frederic Stephenson at Clifton—that is, I mean, you must remember my often talking about knowing him there."

"Perfectly," replied Mr. O'Donagough gravely, re-seating himself at the table; "and no wonder you should have often mentioned him as a gay personage, if that is the style he usually travels in."

"He is a man of immense fortune, and such a dear creature!" said Mrs. O'Donagough, addressing Miss Perkins, and smiling as with a sort of tender recollection of past days.

"He is an old acquaintance, then?" said Miss Matilda, with nervous eagerness.

"Old acquaintance? Bless you, my dear, he is one of the nearest relations I have—by marriage."

"And coming here unexpectedly in this way! Well to be sure, you *are* fortunate, Mrs. O'Donagough. Are you not delighted, Patty?"

"No, not I," replied the young lady. "I don't see the good of having relations, if one

never sees 'em. I'm sure the Huberts might as well be at Jericho as at Brighton, for anything we see of 'em."

"How can you talk such nonsense, Patty," said her vexed mother, "when you know that we have called there three times since the delightful evening they spent here, and have always heard where they were gone. They have always been driving into the country somewhere or other, to amuse my aunt Compton I suppose, and people can't be in two places at once, let them wish it ever so much."

"That's true, I'm sure, if ever anything was," observed Miss Perkins, with energy. "The very nearest relations in the world can't always be as much together as they wish. And after what we saw the other night, my dear Miss Patty, you can't persuade us but what there's one of the party that wouldn't be very far from East Cliff, if he had his own way."

"Come, come, Louisa Perkins! No tales out of school, if you please. Let me give you a little more Irish stew, to stop that mouth of yours," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, laughing.

"Never mind her, Patty. Don't blush about it, cousins will be cousins all the world over."

"It is all very well to talk of drives into the country," said the judicious Matilda, taking her cue from Mrs. O'Donagough's evident delight in the subject; "it is all very possible. Nevertheless, people often throw dust without blinding the lookers on. I saw what I saw, and I know what I know. The General didn't marry so very young himself, remember—and I suspect his opinion is, that young folks ought not to be too much in a hurry."

"There may be something in that, Matilda," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, nodding her head sagaciously. "We must not talk anything about it yet. Captain Dartmoor, remember that this is all among friends, and must go no further."

"Did Stephenson play when he was here?" inquired Mr. Allen O'Donagough, addressing his military friend.

"Oh yes, I believe so!" was the reply. "He did everything—rode races, gave balls, bespoke plays, got up raffles. There was some-

thing or other going on the whole time they stayed—and if you inquired, let it be what it might, you were sure to find that the Stephensons were at the bottom of it."

"What delightful people!" exclaimed Miss Matilda.

"Why yes," replied the lieutenant, looking towards Mrs. O'Donagough; "it would be a good set to get into, certainly."

"But the worst of it is," said Mrs. O'Donagough, with more dignity and reserve of manner than was usual with her; "the worst of it is, that these sort of people are so very exclusive. Near relations, of course, are excepted, but Frederic Stephenson, dear good-natured fellow as he was, and always particularly kind and flattering to me, even before he married my niece's half-sister, even he was always rather famous for giving himself airs."

A gentle sigh heaved the bosom of Matilda. Miss Louisa looked very grave, and shook her head, and the lieutenant seized the decanter of Mazooka, or Mortola, or Pontac, or Bondac, or whatever the mixture might be called

which stood near him, and swallowed a glassful of it.

The result of a certain consultation held that night between Mr. and Mrs. Allen O'Donagough on the subject of this important arrival was that another call at General Hubert's house must be made on the following day, where, if they were not admitted, they might at least obtain intelligence as to the truth of Lieutenant Dartmore's information.

The O'Donagough trio set off accordingly at a proper visiting hour on the following morning, dressed, one and all, with more than usual care, and determined that, if it were possible to avoid it, their trouble should not be in vain.

"Is Mrs. Hubert at home?" was the first question at the General's door. The servant hesitated, and Mrs. O'Donagough instantly made a movement in advance.

"I particularly wish to see my niece, if it be only for half a moment," said she.

"My mistress is just going out, ma'am," replied the man, standing rather pertinaciously in the doorway.

"It is only for one moment, and upon family business of importance," said Mrs. O'Donagough, making another step in advance, before which the man retired of necessity, but without quitting the handle of the door.

"Perhaps, ma'am, you would be pleased to leave word that you would call again," said the servant.

"What do you say, Mr. O'D.? Suppose we do, and fix the time exactly, and then we shall be sure of seeing her."

"Do just as you please, my dear," replied Mr. Allen O'Donagough. "It will make no difference to me. Only," he added, in a whisper, "you may as well ask about the Stephensons."

"Then we will call again—exactly at five o'clock to-day. Please not to forget the message, James—I think your name is James? I am pretty sure I heard my niece call you James."

"Yes, ma'am, my name is James."

"Well then, James, I must insist upon it that my message is delivered exactly. A

message from your mistress's own aunt, you know, ought not to be neglected. Give Agnes —give your mistress, I mean—my most affectionate love, and Miss O'Donagough's love, and Mr. O'Donagough's compliments, and say that we shall call again precisely at five o'clock."

"Yes, ma'am," said the man, advancing a step in his turn, and bringing the door with him.

"Stop one moment, if you please," said Mrs. O'Donagough, laying her palm firmly on the outward side of the door. "Can you tell me, James, if the Stephensons arrived yesterday? Frederic Stephenson, I mean, who married your mistress's sister, you know."

The man looked rather surprised, either at the question or the manner of it, but answered, "Yes, ma'am."

"And where are they? Of course they can't all be here—three carriages—servants outside, and all?"

"No, ma'am, they went directly to their own lodgings."

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

Mrs. O'Donagough lets the general's servant know she is somebody.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

"Then please to give me their address directly."

"Mr. Stephenson has taken ——— House, ma'am, the same he had last year."

"——— House. Whereabouts is it? Do you know ——— House, Mr. O'D.?"

Mr. O'D. did not, but the servant gave the full address, and at length succeeded in shutting the house-door.

"Now, then, let us go there directly," cried Mrs. O'Donagough. "It is no good beating about the bush. Let us take our chance at once. If they choose to be civil, why so much the better, and if not, why we can't help it, and the sooner we know it, the better."

To this reasoning Mr. O'Donagough made no objection; and after toiling a considerable distance through unmitigated sunshine, somewhat to the injury of his lady's rouge, and not much to the advantage of his daughter's temper, they at length reached the handsome mansion to which they had been directed. Mr. O'Donagough stoutly pulled the bell, more stoutly than the well-hung instrument required;

and the *tintamarre* thus produced occasioned an instantaneous throwing wide of the folding doors, disclosing to the dazzled visitors a handsome hall, which at the first glance seemed half-filled with livery servants. The green and gold, recognised by Lieutenant Dartmore, was indeed there, and in great abundance, but set off with such richness of plush and profusion of lace and tassels, that the great soul of Mrs. Allen O'Donagough *almost* felt daunted. Till that moment she had conceived that the establishment of General Hubert was perfectly splendid, but thenceforward she rarely named the family without observing that nothing could be more unpretending and quiet than their manner of living—merely a butler and two footmen, besides the coachman and grooms;—but always adding, that to be sure nothing could be more striking than the contrast between the two sisters in their style of doing things—the establishment of her brother Willoughby's second daughter being really almost royal in its magnificence.

An answer in the affirmative being returned

to their inquiry if Mrs. Stephenson were at home, their names were received, and passed from mouth to mouth till the sound of Mr., Mrs., and Miss O'Donagough, made the lofty staircase ring again.

Mrs. O'Donagough, with an effort worthy of her powerful mind, immediately recovered her self-possession, and gracefully shaking her plumes, marched up the stairs in unblenched majesty. Mr. O'Donagough followed, looking as demure as a newly-created bishop, while the young lady, with wide-staring eyes, and a countenance indicative of something approaching dismay, closed the procession.

On reaching the drawing-room door, Mrs. O'Donagough paused for a moment till her husband and daughter were beside her, and then stepped forward, determined that nothing, short of her being turned out of the room, should prevent her establishing her claim to connexionship with all the grandeur she beheld. The first room they entered was exactly in the style of decoration most likely to enchant the senses of Mrs. O'Donagough, being of that

florid character which is calculated to ensure a rent of forty guineas per week at a watering-place. As it was untenanted, she ventured to exchange an expressive glance with her husband: but the man in green and gold stalked on, and another pair of folding doors being thrown wide before them, disclosed a room with an immense semicircular window opening upon a balcony, which commanded a magnificent view of the sea.

In this balcony stood two gentlemen, the one arranging a spy-glass on its trellis-work, for the accommodation of the other; while a third, whom Patty instantly recognised as her cousin Compton, was assisting a little fellow in a fantastic fancy-dress, composed of blue silk and white muslin, to climb in the most dangerous manner possible to the roof of the frail construction. Close beside the window, on a couch placed perfectly in the shade, though all without was sunshine, reclined nearly at full length, an extremely delicate-looking little woman, with a profusion of light ringlets about her face. Her robe, of the finest muslin, lined

with the prettiest shade of pink, was profusely decorated with lace, her small feet accommodated with quilted satin slippers of the same pale colour, and her slender fingers, sparkling with gems, employed luxuriously in arranging a bouquet of flowering myrtle, and gorgeous geranium-blossoms.

This pretty and very picturesque lady raised a glass to her eye as the strangers were announced. Let them have been whom they would, she could hardly have risen, so difficult would her attitude, and the multitude of flowers in her lap, have rendered the attempt, had she made it. But this she did not do; and her eye-glass failing to supply the information which their names did not convey, she turned it from her visitors to the servant who had ushered them to her presence, and pronounced the word "Who?"

This was not promising, any more than the puzzled air with which, after the name had again been distinctly pronounced, she shook her head, and in a soft, and somewhat lisping voice added, "I fear there is some mistake."

"I cannot be surprised at your not knowing me, my dear Mrs. Stephenson," said Mrs. O'Donagough, pushing away a little work-table, and placing herself close to the sofa, "but I think you must have heard your sister Agnes mention her aunt.—Perhaps you may recal the name of Barnaby?"

"Mrs. Barnaby? Oh dear yes, certainly!" replied Mrs. Stephenson, slightly colouring, and slightly smiling at the same time. "I have heard of you very often. Is that tall lady your daughter? Pray sit down. Sit down, sir," with a wave of the hand to Mr. O'Donagough, which seemed to indicate rather a more distant part of the room for his station. Then turning to a flaxen sylph, of some ten or twelve years old, who was threading beads, she said,

"Go out, Agnes, and tell your papa, and your grandpapa, that Mrs. Barnaby is here."

"No longer Mrs. Barnaby, my dear madam. Give me leave to introduce Mr. O'Donagough, my husband, and Miss O'Donagough, my daughter."

"Oh dear yes; I beg your pardon. I remember all about it now. You went out to India, did you not, as a widow? I quite remember hearing Mr. Stephenson speak of the widow Barnaby; and you married in India, I suppose?" Here Mrs. Stephenson again conveyed her glass very unceremoniously to her eye, and reconnoitred first Mr. O'Donagough, and then his daughter, Mrs. O'Donagough herself being too close to render it necessary; though, in truth, she was exceedingly near-sighted. "I dare say," she continued, still employing her glass, "that my father will remember all about you directly, and I am quite too happy you have called, I wanted to see you so very much."

"It is sweetly kind of you, I am sure, to say so," said the delighted Mrs. O'Donagough. "No wonder that I should long to see *you!* I shall always consider your dear father as my brother, and one of his children must, of course, be as interesting to me as the other. I am quite certain that in a very little while my own dear Agnes, my own sister's child, would hardly be dearer to me than yourself! You are the

very image of your dear father! So like what I remember him at Silverton!"

The still youthful-looking face of Mrs. Stephenson was, during nearly the whole of this speech, completely buried in the large bouquet she held in her two hands. Nor did she speak again, till, in obedience to her summons, Mr. Willoughby and Mr. Stephenson entered from the balcony. Then, raising to them a pair of laughing eyes, though her manner was perfectly grave, and ceremonious, she said,

"Papa, this is Mrs. Barnaby. The late Mrs. Barnaby, I mean. Frederic, I believe you used to know her too. Her name is now Mrs. Donago. She is come to call upon us, with all her family."

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Mr. Willoughby, coming with outstretched hands towards his sister-in-law. "Indeed I am very glad to see her. I hope you are well, my dear Martha?" and with a kind and gentle smile he attempted to take her hand.

But this was not the species of salutation in which Mrs. O'Donagough's warm heart (as she was wont to describe it) most delighted.

"No, dearest Willoughby!" she cried, "after such an absence, let us meet as we parted at Silverton, with a sisterly embrace!" The gentleman of course complied; but sighed as he felt his own slight person lost, as it were, and buried in the majestic vastness of that of his sister-in-law, and remembered how very different were the circumstances of the two moments she thus placed side by side.

The operation completed, however, he resumed his quiet and gentlemanly kindness of manner, gave two fingers to the extended palm of Mr. Allen O'Donagough, upon that person being solemnly presented to him, and kissed, without waiting to be asked, the blooming daughter of his recovered relative.

Mrs. O'Donagough, with her usual quickness, immediately saw that of all the great and grand connexions amidst which her happy destiny had thrown her, Mr. Willoughby was the one to stick to, with the least chance of being shaken off. She felt that he was her sheet anchor, and round him she determined to swing, let the wind blow from what quarter it would.

While these introductions and embracings were proceeding, Mr. Stephenson and Compton Hubert stood silently watching them; the former, with his usual unwearied spirit of gaiety, determined to administer to the amusement which the eyes of his wife—the only portion of her face that was visible—showed she derived from the scene, and the latter only waiting till his grandfather had concluded his civilities to Miss Patty, in order to renew his own acquaintance with her.

Mr. Stephenson speedily perceived that there was no need of any interference on his part, in order to put the well-remembered Mrs. Barnaby in action for the amusement of his wife; neither did it seem to him at all necessary on the present occasion, to put in play any portion of that fund of good-humoured *persiflage*, in which his Nora delighted, for the purpose of bringing forth to view Miss Patty's claims to the same species of notice, inasmuch as his young friend Compton appeared fully adequate to the task. Therefore, having bowed a smiling acknowledgment to Mrs. O'Dona-

gough's affectionate recognition, he sat himself down so as to command a full view of the whole party, and of his wife's eyes into the bargain.

It required but a slight glance from time to time to perceive, that however absurd, there was nothing very new in the flirtation going on between the young people; every feature of the case being essentially the same as must ever recur, when a bold boy is encouraged in his audacity by a coarse-mannered girl. But not so Mrs. Allen O'Donagough. Her energetic affection—her laughing ecstacy at their present reunion, and her weeping softness over the days that were gone—her modest insinuations of her own "*genteel independence,*" and the joy she anticipated from watching with "*true sisterly affection,*" his present affluence—contrasted with Mr. Willoughby's somewhat embarrassed, but always polite manner of listening to her, formed a *tableau* of no common kind, and one from which a less laughter-loving pair than the one before whom it was performed might have found amusement.

At length it seemed to strike Mr. Stephen-

son, who notwithstanding his too boyish love of mystification was really good-natured, that Mr. O'Donagough was left rather too much in the back-ground, and turning abruptly round to him, he said, "Won't you take a look at our fine view, Mr. O'Donagough. This is the most commanding window in Brighton."

Mr. O'Donagough immediately rose, and with a not very unskilful assumption of gentlemanly ease, walked towards the window.

"It is perfectly magnificent!" he said, "and it is unique. No other mansion in Brighton is so happily situated."

"That is very true, sir," said Mr. Stephenson, rising, and following him out upon the balcony. "We have been fortunate enough to get this house three years running."

Frederic Stephenson was one of those happy-natured people who, loving his wife and children, heartily loved also, only in a somewhat less degree, all the other goods with which the gods had provided him, and wanted no warning voice to bid him "think them worth enjoying;" but liked well, nevertheless, that all

around him should perceive and acknowledge what a particularly happy fellow he was in all respects. Had Mrs. O'Donagough been within reach of watching her husband during his conversation with Mr. Stephenson on the balcony she would have found that she did not yet know him so well as she fancied she did, and that there was still some aspects of his Proteus-like nature which had never been exhibited to her. With a cautious avoidance of all subjects that might prove dangerous, Mr. Allen O'Donagough now conversed like a man of the gay world, who knew perfectly well how to appreciate so accomplished a personage as Mr. Stephenson. With the rapidity which is usually acquired by persons that not only possess their wits, but live by them, he contrived to form a tolerably correct estimate of the strong and the weak points of the gentleman's character before he parted from him, while at the same time he left on Mr. Stephenson's mind a persuasion that he was a remarkably clever well-informed man, and that it was quite wonderful how he could ever have married such a ridiculous person as Mrs. Barnaby.

Their colloquy and their acquaintance might have proceeded still further had not Mrs. Stephenson got tired of watching Mrs. Barnaby and her father, and Miss Barnaby and her nephew, which happened the sooner from no longer having her husband's eyes to answer the appeals of her own. For a time, indeed, her young daughter who forsook her beads, and changed her place for the purpose of watching the odd-looking strangers, supplied his absence tolerably well, by the very intelligent looks which she exchanged with her mama (for it was not part of the family discipline to deny the younger branches their fair share and participation in all the enjoyments of quizzing); but the young lady, after having seen enough to enable her to mimic both Mrs. and Miss Donago satisfactorily, ran off to the school-room, to puzzle the French governess, and delight her sisters by the performance.

Soon after her exit, Mrs. Stephenson withdrew the sheltering myrtle from her face, and freely yawned. But neither Mrs. or Miss O'Donagough saw it. They were both too

happy, too elated to observe it. The graceful lady then changed her position on the couch, and with an air of pretty restlessness threw aside her flowers, took a book, yawned again, and finally rose from her attitude of repose, and despite her fear of freckles, sought her husband in the balcony.

"*E troppo, caro!*" she whispered in his ear.

Mr. Stephenson immediately broke short the conversation in which he was engaged, by saying to his wife, as he took her arm, to lead her from an atmosphere which he knew she dreaded, "You are come to remind me, Nora, of my engagement—are you not? I must beg you to excuse me, Mr. O'Donagough, I am obliged to go out, and must therefore wish you a good morning. If you will leave your card, I will certainly have the pleasure of calling on you." The observant Mr. Allen O'Donagough took the hint, and re-entering the room gently admonished his wife upon her seeming forgetfulness of the flight of time.

"My dearest O'D., can you wonder at it?"

she replied, her eyes and her cheeks glowing with enthusiastic sensibility. "Think of the years which have elapsed since my dear brother-in-law and I have thus sat side by side together! Can you not imagine how it must bring back the memory of my beloved Sophia? Such moments are too delicious to be measured!"

Mrs. O'Donagough slowly rose from her chair as she spoke; and what with feathers, veil, floating mantle of stiffened muslin, and her own august expansiveness, it struck Mrs. Stephenson that she had never seen anything so large in her life before, and she seemed to shrink up into her own delicate *mignardise*, as if anxious to increase the contrast. Mrs. O'Donagough stepped towards her with an exended hand; but the fair Nora had no mind to be "shaken," and glancing up an appealing look to her husband, which he perfectly well understood, she retrograded a step or two, at the same time bowing her farewell, while he advanced, took the large hand in his own much smaller one, and atoned for all his lady's

deficiencies, by a voluble repetition of "Good bye, Mrs. O'Donagough, good bye, good bye."

Though Frederic, notwithstanding all his good nature, shook the huge hand very much as if he wished to shake it off, Mrs. O'Donagough held fast, till in a half-whisper, she had murmured something very tender to him about the memory of Clifton, and past times—then determined to emulate the elegant retreating movement of Mrs. Stephenson, she began backing out of the room, bending deeply forward at every step, like the head of a ship in a *too* fair wind, and reiterating "GOOD morning! GOOD morning! GOOD morning!" till she reached the door.

Mr. O'Donagough was so glad that it was over, and as he felt *well* over, that on throwing open the door of communication between the two drawing-rooms, for his daughter and wife to pass, he slipped by them, as if the more quickly to ensure his own retreat. On reaching the landing-place, however, and finding himself again amidst the impressive troop of green and gold officials, he remembered that

he was not making his exit according to the established rules of etiquette, and turned round to make way for his wife and daughter to pass before him. It was with a feeling little short of dismay, that he found that they were not, as he imagined, close at his heels, and on casting an Orpheus-like backward glance into the rooms, he perceived that his wife was *not* half set free, for she was still in the inner apartment.

In fact, while backing out of the room with her husband and daughter following, Mrs. O'Donagough had totally lost sight of and forgotten her slender brother-in-law; but no sooner did she perceive him again upon the removal of Mr. O'Donagough's person, than it struck her she had not properly taken leave of him, and rushing back again, she very liberally threw her arms around him—for her fond hands met behind his back—and impressing a not silent kiss upon his cheek, exclaimed, "Good heaven! was I indeed going without uttering a sister's farewell to you, dearest Willoughby? Let us soon meet again! I

have no words to express the happiness I feel in your society!" And then, as Frederic, Nora, and the young Compton had all taken refuge in the balcony, she turned about, quitted the room with a rapid step, seized upon Patty's arm, who was left staring in the doorway, rejoined her husband, and with happy and triumphant feelings descended the stairs, which, as she owned as soon as she had left the house, she had mounted an hour before with her heart in her mouth.

"She is gone, positively gone, Nora!—so come in, out of this scorching air!" said Mr. Stephenson, after carefully reconnoitring the apartment.

"Thank our stars!" replied his wife, falling, as if exhausted, upon the sofa.

"It is a very hot day," said Mr. Willoughby, rising from a chair, into which he had sunk, when Mrs. O'Donagough withdrew her arms from his person. "Very hot and oppressive indeed—I think, Nora, I will go into my own dressing-room, and lie down upon the sofa a little. But don't let any of the dear children

come to me, for I feel very much overcome and fatigued." So saying, the gentle, kind-hearted Mr. Willoughby languidly withdrew, and soon fell fast asleep without having even whispered to his own heart that his affectionate sister-in-law had nearly talked and hugged him to death.

"Are they not curious people, aunt Nora?" said Compton, as soon as his grandfather had quitted the room.

"Curious! Oh! Heavens!" replied Mrs. Stephenson, with a profound sigh. And then she stopped, as if unable to articulate another word.

"The girl is handsome though, isn't she?" demanded the youth, adding with a shrug, "but to be sure she is most horribly vulgar!"

"Handsome? you have the face to call that monster handsome, Compton? How hideously ugly you must think us all, your mother and sisters included."

"No I don't, aunt. But there are more styles than one, you know."

"Do stop him, Frederic! For mercy's

sake do not let him talk of *styles*, with that fearful creature in his thoughts! Do explain to him what style means, will you? His mother has a style, and I have a style—of—of appearance, I mean. But to use such a phrase to her, really looks as if he did not know the use of language. It is perfectly disgraceful. Dearest Frederic! For pity's sake tell me, must I ever endure the sight of those people more?"

"Upon my word I am afraid so, Nora," was the unsatisfactory reply. "Remember that they are nearly related to your sister Agnes, and in fact very nearly connected with your father. How will it be possible to avoid your seeing them?"

"Then you must make up your mind to my dying, Frederic, for as to my enduring existence under circumstances resembling those of the last three hours, it is perfectly out of the question."

"Well then, dear, we must contrive to vary the circumstances as much as possible. The sight of that great woman amuses me more than I can express! It is a sort of lesson in

natural history to watch her as she is now, and remember her as she was some dozen and half years ago, or near it. I would not give her up for more than I'll say—and Compton's love, too! With her large face, bright cheeks, and brighter eyes! They are treasures, perfectly treasures in their way."

"See what it is to be a philosopher!" sighed forth Mrs. Stephenson, resting her head on the arm of her couch, and applying a bottle of salts to her nose. "You are too sublime for me, Frederic!—you are indeed!"

"If you will be a good girl," replied her husband, laughing, "and promise not to die about it, I will let you off easy, promising only to indulge my scientific speculations now and then. How she contrived to get him I cannot guess; but Madam Barnaby's husband is really a very well-behaved sensible man."

"Oh—h!!" was uttered by Mrs. Stephenson, with another profoundly deep "suspiration of forced breath."

"Come, Nora!" said Frederic, "make the best of it. I am certain your father will be

vexed, dear good man, if you declare open war upon this unfortunate race."

"My father? Nay, Frederic, it is too good to quote him against me when you have this moment seen him take to his bed, sick of the Barnaby! However, let us talk no more about them, or decidedly I must go to bed too. Ring the bell, dear, will you, and order some open carriage or other—I die for fresh air! By the way, Frederic, do you think that large lady will ever kiss me? I give you warning, you will never see me alive again if she does."

"Every possible precaution, Nora, shall be taken to prevent it; and we will keep Compton always in readiness to act as your deputy, should the thriving offspring of the large lady attempt anything of the kind. You will not refuse, Compton, to perform this vicarial service for your aunt?"

The boy coloured, tossed his handsome head, and yielded to the solicitations of his young cousin to return to the balcony, and set him climbing again.

"Where will you drive, Nora?" inquired

Mr. Stephenson, when the carriage was announced.

"To see Agnes, and consult with her how best to guard against the inroads of this horde of savages."

"Do so, my dear, by all means. She will counsel you very discreetly, depend upon it."

* * * * *

When the sisters met, there was, as usual, a very free exchange of confidential communication between them. Mrs. Stephenson declared that her curiosity being satisfied, she felt nothing but terror at the idea of any familiar intercourse with "Mrs. Donago;" and that, somehow or other, she must find means to prevent. To all this Agnes listened without surprise; but when in her turn she dwelt upon her own embarrassments from the same source, and related all the circumstances of the General's half-playful warfare with Mrs. Compton on the subject, the feelings of Nora underwent a sudden change. Notwithstanding a firm foundation of genuine liking and goodwill, there was often a considerable difference of opinion

on many subjects between the high-minded and dignified, yet simple-mannered General Hubert, and the capricious and affected, though affectionate little beauty, his sister-in-law.

She had quite sense and right feeling enough to be conscious of his high worth, and often in her graver moods, acknowledged his superiority to everybody in the world, but her husband. Yet she dearly loved to contradict him, and to make him feel, in spite of all his wisdom, that the very folly of a pretty woman has power in it. She was, moreover, wont to declare, that his wife spoiled him, and that all he wanted to make him perfectly agreeable, was a little well-organized contradiction.

The tormenting process which the venerable Mrs. Compton seemed to be now making him undergo, for the express purpose of proving that he had been wrong, secretly delighted Mrs. Stephenson. She listened to every word concerning it with deep attention, comprehended perfectly the game which both parties were playing, and immediately determined, thoughtless of consequences, to eke out aunt Betsy's

efforts to prove that the General had blundered by every means in her power. Of this new whim she gave no hint to Agnes, but parted from her with a gentle promise to endure the Donago infliction as patiently as she could.

Had it not been for this unfortunate vagary on the part of Mrs. Stephenson, it is probable that all serious annoyance from the O'Donagoughs would have gradually died away, from the positive difficulty of keeping up anything like friendly intercourse between persons so every way incongruous. But for this, the *ci-devant* Major's ambitious projects would have gradually sunk into a humbler sphere, his wife would soon have preferred talking of her "darling Agnes," to enduring the restraint of her presence; Aunt Betsy would have grown weary of the sport, and so would Master Compton too; while it can hardly be doubted that General Hubert himself would have gladly suffered the discordant connexion to be placed on a proper footing, according to Mrs. O'Donagough as much consideration as might be granted without inconvenience to his own family, but no more.

That all this was most devoutly to be wished, nobody felt so strongly as poor Agnes; but unfortunately in this case, neither her judgment nor her conduct could avail to check the mischief produced by the frolicsome thoughtlessness of Nora—the easy pliability of her husband, and the sort of compunctious weakness with which poor Mr. Willoughby permitted himself to be persecuted by his first wife's sister, as a sort of atonement for his deeply-repented neglect of her child. All this worked together so effectually, that before the end of a fortnight, the mischief had got so far ahead of them, as to produce a perfectly good understanding on the subject between General Hubert and Mrs. Compton. Both cordially confessed they had been wrong, and most cordially united in deprecating the consequences of it; but, unfortunately, they were no longer capable of stopping the movement they had put in action.

Mr. O'Donagough, without making the slightest attempt to lead Stephenson to play contrived to discover that in the winter he had

no sort of objection to it; and, meanwhile, contrived by innumerable devices to make himself useful and even agreeable to him. With as much genuine coarseness, he had infinitely more tact than his vulgar wife, and was, in truth, so able an actor, that with an object of sufficient importance before him, he was capable of sustaining many characters extremely foreign to his own. Stephenson soon believed him to have been the most enthusiastic sportsman, the most enterprising naturalist, and the most benevolent speculator who had ever visited New South Wales, and listened to his unbounded lies with undoubting confidence, till at length he became fully convinced, that despite the peculiarities of "the Barnaby," he had found a very valuable acquaintance in her husband; and that at the time when everybody was talking of the country with interest, it was really very pleasant to have picked up a man who probably knew more about it than any one else in England. It was exactly the sort of thing Frederic Stephenson liked, enabling him to get in the van

of information, without the bore of reading interminable books, and endless quarterly articles upon it; and, in short, Mr. Allen O'Donagough was soon on such excellent terms with "the rich Stephenson," that he dined with him twice in one week, and might most days be seen walking and talking with him on the pier for an hour together. This intimacy went on the more prosperously, because Mrs. Stephenson contrived in her usual easy style, to perform her part of the mischief she was so thoughtlessly promoting, with very little inconvenience to herself. She called once or twice on Mrs. O'Donagough; but as her carriage had two or three children in it, she could not leave them, and therefore only sent in her card, and when these visits were returned, it was poor Mr. Willoughby who had to converse with her. The inviting Mr. O'Donagough to dinner, of course did not include the ladies of the family; yet the talking of it served extremely well to show the General that his friendly reception of his wife's aunt had already entailed the connexion upon them; and in

addition to this, Nora more than once amused herself by inviting Patty to pass the evening when Compton was engaged to dine with them: a device which produced a display of coquetry on the part of the young lady, so comic, as repeatedly to make her forget her fine-ladyism in hearty laughter at the remembrance of it.

It was by dilating a little too maliciously upon this, in the presence both of General Hubert and Mrs. Compton, that the foundation of a perfect reconciliation between them was laid. No sooner did they find themselves alone together, or, at least, with Agnes only for a witness, than they both, as by common consent, pleaded guilty to great folly in permitting Compton to amuse himself in so objectionable a manner; and the ice once broken, nothing could be more frank than the sincerity with which each declared themselves to blame. But, unfortunately, it was much easier to confess the fault than to remedy it; and so insidiously did Mrs. O'Donagough contrive to turn every accident to profit in promoting the inter-

course between the cousins, that at length the old lady suddenly declared her intention of returning immediately to Compton Basset, and taking her young heir with her for the purpose of giving him some shooting upon *his own manor*. This was conferring a degree of pre-eminent dignity upon the boy, which both father and mother, under other circumstances, would have been very likely to disapprove; but now no objection was made to it, and the scheme was immediately decided upon. The bright eyes of Miss Patty could by no means stand a competition with partridge-shooting with his own dogs, and the youthful Lothario, mounted on the coach-box of aunt Betsy's carriage, dashed past the abode of his *belle*, and waved his hat so gaily to her and her mother who stood together at the open drawing-room window, that though little was said between them on the subject, both felt that "spiteful aunt Betsy" had achieved a *tour de force*, which disappointed many projects.

The mother consoled herself by remembering that "the horrid old woman could not

live for ever," and the daughter found solace in a long recapitulation of Jack's love-making on board the Atalanta, during a long walk on the cliff with her faithful friend Matilda.

The departure of Compton, and, to say the truth, the departure of aunt Betsy also, were, under the present circumstances, a considerable relief to General Hubert; nevertheless, the O'Donagough plague was far from being put an end to by it. Agnes was still perpetually pained by witnessing the annoyance endured by her father under the persecutions of his affectionate sister-in-law.

It was Mr. Willoughby's habit to ramble out every morning, when at the sea-side, immediately after breakfast, sometimes leading one grandchild with him, and sometimes another. Mrs. O'Donagough soon became acquainted with this fact, and from that hour the unfortunate gentleman was never permitted to inhale the breeze he loved, without having her closely fastened to his side. Though neither his spirits nor his frame were particularly robust, he might, perhaps, have endured

this daily annoyance with greater fortitude, had it been confined to the operations of her tongue as she walked beside him; but always conscious that of all those upon whom she hung for the gratification of her ambition, he was the one who would endure the demonstrations of her love most patiently, she never relaxed in her determination to make the most of him.

This led to such heavy hangings on his arm, such lusty tappings on the back, when she had hunted him into the public library, and so many other wearying tokens of affectionate familiarity, that though he complained to no one, his life positively became a burden to him; and it was only because he thought somebody or other would guess the reason, and think he was unkind to "poor Sophy's sister," that he did not at once take to his bed in order to get rid of her.

The only person who did *guess the reason* of his languid looks and altered spirits, was his daughter Agnes; and the idea having once suggested itself there was no great difficulty in

testing its truth, and convincing herself that it was well founded. As soon as she became quite sure of the fact, she pointed it out to her husband, who secretly reproached himself much more severely than he confessed, for having been so greatly the cause of it. These feelings *d'un part et d'autre* soon led to the anticipation of a scheme, long ago projected, but not intended to take place till the following year.

General Hubert's eldest son had gone through Eton school with such brilliant rapidity as to be ready for college at least two years before his father wished to send him there. During this dangerous interval he had himself determined upon being his tutor, and by taking him on the Continent with his mother and sisters, hoped to assist essentially the formation of his moral character, while giving him the advantage of modern languages, and extensive travelling.

In this scheme Mr. Willoughby had been always included; he had already repeatedly visited Italy, and had so uniformly found him-

self in better health on the Continent, that nothing but his averseness to leave his daughters and their children, induced him to reside in England.

Had General and Mrs. Hubert wanted any confirmation on the subject of Mr. Willoughby's weariness of Brighton, they would have found it in the manner of his receiving their proposal for immediately leaving it for France.

When every member of a party is cordially desirous of promoting a scheme, and ample means exist to facilitate its being carried into execution, it is wonderful how much may be done in a little time. Mrs. Hubert, Miss Wilmot, and the two girls, with their attendants, almost immediately crossed to Dieppe, under the escort of Mr. Willoughby, while General Hubert, who it was settled should join them at Paris, returned to London for the purpose of settling everything previous to his leaving England, and arranging the movements of his son Montague upon his finally quitting school.

Old Mrs. Compton had been long prepared for this separation, and was comforted under it, by Compton Hubert's promising to make Compton Basset, now become a very handsome residence, his principal home during the vacations; while to its taking place somewhat earlier than was intended, she was perfectly reconciled by the motive for it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NATURAL ANTIPATHY, AND STRONG AFFECTION—NECESSITY OWNS NO LAWS BUT HER OWN—THE MISS PERKINSES OWN THIS SOLEMN TRUTH, AND PREPARE TO LEAVE BRIGHTON—FRIENDSHIP MAKES AN EFFORT TO PREVENT IT, BUT FAILS—LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF LOVE.

NOTWITHSTANDING the sudden departure of General Hubert, and his family, the memory of their greatness, like the light-diffusing tail of a comet, remained behind them, and Mrs. O'Donagough continued to be a person of unquestionable importance with all her Brighton acquaintance. The circle, indeed, was not a large one; her affections, as she observed to every member of it, having been too much centred on her own relations to leave her leisure for cultivating the miscellaneous friendship of the world at large.

"I know this is not right," said she, "I am quite aware that it is one's duty to be condescending and civil to everybody; but with me it is always the heart that speaks, and it would be in vain to attempt struggling with my affection for my darling niece, Mrs. Hubert, and her dear family—they have made me positively neglect everybody else; but I cannot help it! Those who know her will appreciate the attraction, and forgive me; while by those who do not, I must submit to be accounted fastidious, exclusive, and most abominably proud."

Mr. O'Donagough, who, when he was not meditating on matters more important, would frequently derive considerable amusement from listening to his wife, now and then indulged in a little quiet quizzing at her expense; but she had too much good sense to take a great deal of notice of it, and generally contrived, indeed, to end by having much the best of it in her own opinion.

One point on which he particularly liked to attack her was on the change in their relative positions, as to their intercourse with the Ste-

phenson family. He remembered their first visit, and the secondary part he had acted upon that occasion, which he loved to contrast with the one now allotted him.

"I cannot think how it is, my dear, that you see so very little of your own near connexion, Mrs. Stephenson, while I am got so pleasantly intimate with her husband; but it seems really as if you counted for nothing with them," said he.

"The reason for that is plain enough, Mr. O'Donagough—I cannot abide that little idiot woman; in fact, I perfectly hate the sight of her—odious doll! lolling almost at full length in her open carriage, just to make everybody stare at her, with a dozen children like so many monkeys stuck up behind and before, to make up the show."

"Don't agitate yourself, my dear!" resumed the gentleman, in a mild voice; "though I cannot greatly wonder at your feeling vexed. She really takes no more notice of you than if you were no relation at all; and considering how remarkably affectionate you are to all your cousins, it must be very trying."

"You may keep your pity to yourself, Mr. O'Donagough, and if you fancy I am affronted, you were never more deceived in your life.—Besides, you mistake the matter altogether. The fact is, she is all but blind, poor thing, and I don't choose to be always bawling after her, as the carriage drives along; but it is most preposterously out of the question, to suppose for a moment, that she would dare to cut me!"

"Well, my dear, I dare say you know best; but sometimes it looks very like it."

"Nonsense, O'Donagough! Cut me, indeed! when her own father, dear affectionate creature, perfectly dotes upon me! He treats me a thousand times more like a sister, than a sister-in-law, and—bless him! I love him in return as a real sister should, and so he shall find, I can tell her, as soon as he comes back to England; for let him be where he will, in town or country, I am quite determined to be near him. People as sincerely attached as we are, cannot bear to be long parted."

* * * * *

Some weeks more of fine autumn weather

passed away, during which the O'Donagough family, and their little *coterie*, continued to enjoy the sea-breezes and each other's society, in the most fashionable manner.

Some desultory conversations occasionally arose between the *ci-devant* Major and his lady as to what they were to do, and where they were to go next. On all these occasions, Mr. O'Donagough permitted his wife to talk almost as much as she liked, without uttering a word that deserved the name of contradiction. But though she laid down very plainly what he had best do—and what of course he would do—and what it would be perfect madness if he did not do, the subject always came to a close without leaving her at all wiser respecting his real intentions than when it began.

Meanwhile, Patty was enjoying herself greatly; for though, as she ingenuously confessed to her friend Matilda, she had no one *beau* in particular, there was not one of the set, except Foxcroft, who did not make a little love to her, whenever they had an opportunity. But a heavy blow was about to disturb her tranquillity.

The Miss Perkinses having by this time, in the most lady-like and respectable manner, expended the sum (whatever it might have been) destined for their marine excursion, had been one morning looking anxiously over all their little accounts, and had reluctantly decided that it was quite time to return to their first floor at Belle-Vue-terrace, Brompton, for the remainder of the passing year, and the first seven months of the next.

They had just mutually exchanged the melancholy words, "Yes, we must go!" when their beloved Patty, with her accustomed vehemence of vivacity, bounced into the room.

"What a hateful bad day it is for the glass!" she exclaimed, rushing to the window, which a driving rain from the south-west had obliged the sisters reluctantly to close. "Not a soul to be seen in the sea, or out of it! Isn't it a bore?"

"Alas! my dearest Patty," replied Miss Matilda, "vexing as it is to see the rain fall so, I have got something at my heart worse than that."

"Why, you haven't seen Foxcroft go by without looking in, or anything of that sort, have you?" replied the sympathizing young girl, with a significant smile.

"No, Patty, no, not that. I really don't believe there is any danger of it," replied Matilda, with a heavy sigh. "Poor Foxcroft! poor dear fellow! he little thinks how soon all our delightful evenings, in that dear drawing-room up-stairs, will be over!"

"Over?" echoed Patty. "Why, what's in the wind now? the route isn't come, is it?"

"Not for him, Patty, but it has come for me!"

"What do you mean, Matilda?"

"Only too truly what I say, dearest! Think what I feel when I tell you that my sister has received a letter from London this morning, which renders it absolutely necessary that we should return home immediately."

"Stuff and nonsense!" replied Patty. "I should like to know what there is to make you two go, if you choose to stay? What's the good of being old maids?—of course I don't

mean *you*, Matilda, for I really don't believe you will be one in the end; but what's the good of having nobody in the world belonging to you, if you can't stay when you please, and go when you please?"

"Business, my dear, you know must be minded," said Miss Louisa, rather mysteriously.

"Well, then, let Miss Louisa go by herself," said the lively Patty. "She is old enough to walk alone, and I neither can nor will be left here without you to walk with, Matilda. You shan't budge a step, till we go too."

"Dear, darling creature!" exclaimed Miss Matilda, in a burst of enthusiastic fondness, while a delightful hope flashed through her mind that it was possible Mrs. O'Donagough, to please her daughter, might ask her to remain as their guest after her sister went. So overwhelming was this sudden hope that it almost choked her, and pressing both her hands upon her heaving breast, she looked in the face of her young friend with the most touching expression imaginable.

Patty inherited a considerable portion of her mother's acuteness, and saw in a moment what her friend had got in her head. The idea accorded perfectly with her own inclination, which would have prompted her at once to offer the half of her own little bed, rather than be left without a friend and confidant. But she remembered her papa, and remembered, too, the cold-meat dinners which frequently graced their domestic board; so she prudently restrained her hospitality, and only said,

"Stop a minute, Matilda! I want to speak to mama, and you must not stir till I come back again."

"Darling girl! I know what she is gone for," exclaimed the agitated Matilda, as soon as the door was closed. "Oh, Louisa! I shall be perfectly wild with joy if she succeeds. I do assure you very seriously that I think Foxcroft means to propose to me. You need not shake your head so gloomily, my dear. I know that you are thinking how often I have been disappointed before; but certainly no one can be so good a judge as myself what his

manner is. Besides, Louisa, if the O'Donagoughs invite me, I should like to accept it, whether I am right or wrong about Foxcroft; but this I will say, that if he really does mean nothing, it is better for my peace of mind, that I should find it out at once, and if I *do* find him to be such a villain, I shall soon cease to care about him, I can promise you that. You may depend upon it, my dear, I shall spend nothing—not a single sixpence after you are gone, excepting about eighteenpence a-week for my washing."

While the ardent Matilda thus pleaded her own cause below stairs, her faithful friend was not less eloquent above. She had, however, a tougher listener to deal with.

"So here you are together—that's right," said she, as she entered the drawing room, with an assured step and confiding spirit; "I have got something that I want to say to you both."

"And what may that be, Miss Brighteyes?" demanded her father.

"I'll tell you in no time," replied the young lady, approaching him; "but please to re-

member, pap, that this time you must let me have my own way, or you and I shall be two."

"Indeed! and pray what's in the wind now?"

"What do you think, both of you, of the Perkinses being going away?"

"No! are they indeed?" cried Mrs. O'Donagough.

"Never mind, Patty, we shall not be long behind them," added her husband.

"But I don't choose to be behind them at all, papa," replied the young lady.

"That's nonsense, Patty. I won't have you go trying to fix their starting for just the same day as ours, I don't want to have my travelling ways spied into by anybody, and that I should have thought you might have known by this time."

"Oh yes, papa, I know all that of course; but as I have chosen Matilda Perkins for my particular friend, she must not be counted as anybody; and what I am come for now, is to say that you must let me invite her to stay behind her sister, and sleep with me."

"You shall do no such thing, Miss Patty, I promise you," replied her papa; "and if you have got into the scrape of asking her, with your eyes shut, you may get out of it as you can with your eyes open. And now come here," he continued, holding out both his hands to invite her approach, "I have something to say to you." Patty felt a prodigiously strong inclination to snap her fingers, and run out of the room; but she fortunately gave a glance at the expressive countenance of her parent, and then walked quietly enough towards him, placing her hands in his. "Now then, Martha O'Donagough," he said, "listen to a word or two, and take my advice when I tell you to remember them. I never will, now or ever, suffer any human being, man, woman, or child, except servants, to enter my house as an inmate. You are but a baby, Miss Patty, with all your cleverness, as to the ways of the world, or you would understand the wisdom of this. But whether you understand it or not, REMEMBER IT; and remember, too, if you please, that though I give you free leave to make as many

friends as you like, and to talk to them early and late, of your bonnets and beaux, I will lock you up upon bread and water, as sure as you stand here, if I ever catch you uttering a single syllable about me, or my house, or my friends, or anything that I do, or anything that I say. Don't fancy, Patty, that I shall not find it out. I have not lived for nothing, my dear, and what I want to know, I generally get at, first or last. Ask your mama."

Mrs. O'Donagough, though possessed in no common degree of the courage and confidence produced by the consciousness of great mental power—and no woman could have a much higher idea of her own ability—felt nevertheless something exceedingly like awe, as she now listened to her husband. She often, indeed, felt that she did not fully comprehend him—that there were still many peculiarities in his character that she could not quite make out, and that, although, as she constantly assured herself and Patty, she was not in the least bit afraid of him, some feeling which she could not exactly describe, generally in all their

little disputes led her to the conclusion that it might be as well not to defy him. It was this which made her, when thus appealed to, immediately answer, "Mind what he says to you, Patty, there's a good girl. Of course he knows best, and when he speaks in earnest, as he does now, it would be very silly and wrong not to mind. So say nothing at all, Patty, to Matilda about staying. I can't say I should much approve it myself—she has always seen everything about us quite genteel, and what's the good of letting her know what we like to do when we are quite by ourselves? Besides, Patty, you must see that she is getting so intimate with Foxcroft, as to be sure of telling him just everything—and I have no notion of that. The officers have always seen us in the most agreeable manner possible—and what with my clever little suppers, and my dear relationship to the General, it is sure and certain that we count for people of consequence with them, which may be a great advantage to us all, let us meet them where we will."

"That's enough, and to spare, mama," said

Miss Patty, venturing to bestow upon her female parent the sulkiness generated by the decision of her father. "For pity's sake don't go preaching on any longer. If I mustn't have a friend to speak to, I mustn't, and there's an end of that—only I hope we are not to stay much longer in this beastly stupid place—I am as tired as tired of it." And with these words the young lady made her exit, slamming the door after her with considerable energy.

She had no great difficulty, on reaching the parlour again, to read on the countenance of her friend the hopes and expectations to which her own sudden departure had given rise, and spite of the lecture she had just received, she scrupled not to confess that she had asked for leave to invite her, and had been refused. Her manner of confessing this, however, showed the species of inherited talent she possessed, as much as it did her filial obedience to the spirit, as well as to the letter of her instructions.

"I would have given anything, Matilda, to have got you to stay with me," she said, "but mama's notions are always so grand about

everything, that she won't ask you because she hasn't a fine handsome bed-room to put you in."

"Oh dear me! I hope she would not mind that with such an intimate friend as I am!" exclaimed the affectionate Matilda, almost sobbing with eagerness.

"There's no good in thinking any more about it, my dear," replied Patty decisively. "It's no go."

"And all because of the bed-room being little!" rejoined Matilda, with a groan. "Oh! Patty! I'd sleep upon the floor with a blanket round me, with joy and gladness, that I would! —Yes, Patty, or without a blanket either, rather than go away from you—that I would!"

The excited feelings of the disappointed lady here overpowered her, and she burst into tears.

"It is folly and nonsense crying about it, Matilda," said Patty, with less of sympathizing softness than her friend might have wished. "That's not my way. They never make me cry now, let them do or say what they will.

I always get my own way when I can, and when I cannot, which isn't often, I just snap my fingers at them, and take pretty good care to get something else out of 'em before I've done."

Miss Matilda here took Miss Louisa aside to the farthest corner of the room, and consulted her in a whisper, as to the possibility of her continuing to occupy their present bedroom for a week or two longer.

"My dear child," replied the tender-hearted elder sister, "there is nothing I would not do to help you; but you know we have reckoned the money over and over, and that there will be, when all's paid, but just enough to take us to our own door, and not a penny to spare. I wish to heaven you had not bought that blue silk gown, Matilda!"

"There is no good in taunting me with that now, Louisa; I had the best of motives for it, and it is cruel to throw it at me, at the very moment too when I am within such a hair's-breadth of making it answer. Dear, dear Louisa! do try to help me! Think what a

thing it would be for both of us, if I *was* to marry!"

"What *can* I do, Matilda?" replied the elder; "I can't do miracles you know." But after a moment's consideration she added, "There is but one way I can think of, and that's one I don't like at all. I suppose we *might* leave the shoe bill till next year."

"Good heavens! to be sure we might," replied Matilda, with recovered spirits, and suddenly giving her sister a most cordial kiss. "There is nobody of any fashion, as we all know, who does not leave bills everywhere." Then suddenly approaching Patty, who, despite the unfavourable state of the atmosphere, was employed as usual in making experiments with the telescope, and addressing her in a tone that expressed both tenderness and gaiety, she said, "My darling Patty! I do positively think it would break my heart to part with you a single hour before I was absolutely forced to do it, and Louisa says that of course I could keep on my own bed-room, if that was all."

Considerably alarmed by this pertinacity,

which appeared very likely to bring her into a scrape, Patty replied rather abruptly, "Yes, my dear, but it is not all, papa is every bit as proud as mama, and he says that nothing in the world should ever make him invite any one to stay with us without having servants, footmen, you know, and all that. So it is no good to say any more about it."

"But my dearest Patty! Surely such a friend as I am—"

"Say no more about it, I tell you, Matilda, but run and put your things on, and come down to the pier, it does not rain a drop now to signify, and I am pretty sure I saw Foxcroft and Willis cross over as if they were going that way."

It was with a heavy heart, though with a rapid step, that the unfortunate Matilda ran up stairs to comply with this request, and mournfully desponding was the voice in which she murmured to her friend as they walked along, "Oh, Patty! if we should meet Foxcroft, how shall I bear to tell him that we go on Monday?"

"You must make the best of it, my dear, that is all I can say," replied her friend. "But step quicker, Matilda! There they are, as I live, just going upon the pier now! They must have stopped somewhere or other since I first saw them."

The eyes of Patty had not deceived her; on reaching the pier they found the two gentlemen she had named, beguiling their superabundant leisure by leaning over the wall, and watching a distant ship or two through the haze. Of course the young ladies expressed some surprise at seeing them. "So then, you are no more afraid of a Scotch mist than we are?" said Patty, giving her parasol to Mr. Willis, while she tightened the strings of her too fragile bonnet.

"Anything is better than staying boxed up at home," replied the young man; "and I suppose that's your idea, Miss Patty, as well as ours?"

"I suppose it is," answered Patty. "But I don't intend to stand still, shivering like this—I shall walk up and down just as fast as I can trot."

"Well, then, you had better give me your arm, or upon my life you will be blown over," said Mr. Willis, while Mr. Foxcroft offered his to her companion in the most touching of manners, namely, without saying a word; which always seems to indicate that protection on the one side, and dependance on the other, is a matter of course between the parties.

Patty and her companion chattered away at a great rate; but Mr. Foxcroft and Miss Matilda Perkins walked on for several paces without exchanging a word. The lady's heart was beating violently, and the gentleman's head was at work.

When an unmarried officer of the line is very hard up, it is by no means an unusual thing that he should turn his thoughts towards matrimony; but when conscious that his last birthday left him within a lustre of half a hundred, and that his hair is a dapple, between red and gray, he confines himself, if he be wise, to the minor prizes in the market, takes especial care that there be no fathers or brothers in the way, and is particular about nothing, save the

certainty that the lady has got something, and that this something is at her own disposal. At the moment above mentioned, Lieutenant Foxcroft was turning in his head all the facts which had reached his knowledge tending to throw light on the financial concerns of his fair friend. Mr. O'Donagough had shown himself perfectly ready to give all the information he could, to which friendly openness he was perhaps in some degree prompted by the fact, that Mr. Foxcroft owed him a debt of honour, amounting to seventy-three pounds—but in truth, his knowledge of the Miss Perkinses' concerns was not sufficient to justify giving advice on so important a point, and the brave lieutenant felt that he must be his own pioneer. This naturally gave something of restraint to his conversation, while on the other hand the collected tenderness of thirty-six years, in a bosom peculiarly prone to receive soft impressions, produced a swelling fulness in the heart of Miss Matilda, which for a considerable time rendered it impossible for her to speak a word.

At length Lieutenant Foxcroft became fully aware that there was something dangerous in this protracted silence, and preluding the words by a slight cough, he said,

"What a very unpleasant day for the sea-side it is!"

It was with a sigh which an actress might have taken as a model, that Miss Matilda replied "Very."

Again they were both silent; when the lady, perceiving by the green drops that trickled from her parasol upon her bosom, that it would probably soon rain too hard for even Patty to continue her promenade, determined that the precious moments which were passing, should not pass in vain, and struggling to subdue the vehemence of her feelings, that she might speak distinctly, she said,

"Captain Foxcroft! This is, I suppose, the last walk that we shall take together at Brighton. My sister and myself return to our London home on Monday."

They had just reached that end of the pier which abuts upon the sea, as this annunciation

concluded; upon which the Lieutenant stood stock still; and though the barrier against which the waves were rudely breaking was cold and wet, the agitated Matilda gladly availed herself of the support it offered; and, regardless of the smart silk-scarf that perished in the act, she placed both her arms upon it, and remained with her eyes intently fixed upon the ocean.

The news she had thus communicated considerably startled Mr. Foxcroft, and plunged him in a very disagreeable dilemma; for he was by no means ready to act upon it in any way. He would, indeed, have been vastly imprudent had he committed himself either by declaring a passion or pronouncing a farewell. For while, on the one hand, the lady's evident independence, and equally evident partiality, urged him forward, his ignorance of the amount of what he might gain by proceeding, kept him back. His conduct, under the circumstances, was in every way judicious; being, in fact, the result of great experience, and a thorough acquaintance with all such matters. After a

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Mrs. Mitchell. Perkins takes a last farewell to the shore.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

pause, which told Matilda quite as plainly as any words could have done, that her news had almost annihilated him, he said,

"Is it possible?"

"It is indeed!" she replied, with expressive emphasis.

Another pause followed.

"In what part of that vast wilderness will you be hid, my dear Miss Matilda?" said the Lieutenant, with a truly military sigh.

"We live at Brompton," was the softly-whispered reply.

"Of course, our friends, the O'Donagoughs, will always know where you are?"

"Oh! yes," she answered, while her heart was torn by conflicting joy at this proof that he meant to inquire for her, and grief at perceiving that whatever might be his future intentions, there was for the present no hope whatever of a declaration.

Such being too clearly the case, and the rain now falling in such torrents, that Patty and Mr. Willis had taken to their heels and ran home (not without a little joking upon the

tête-à-tête at the pier head). Such being the case, Miss Matilda Perkins made up her mind to turn round and walk home likewise. But even in that wet, dirty, dismal moment, hope lingered at her heart, and she determined to try what one honest, open, unmitigated look of tenderness might produce. The circumstances of her position were favourable to the experiment, for the "plentiful moisture" which encumbered her hair, gave her face a sort of forlorn and melancholy look, of which she was not wholly unconscious, and which she thought might serve her better at such a moment than the tightest curls. But, alas! there are some natures upon which the innocent little trickeries and pearly tears of tender woman fall like soft dew-drops on the sturdy oak. They may glitter about it; nay, sometimes shine almost like a glory around its lofty crest, but not a fibre is moved thereby.

Nothing could be more expressive, more intelligible, more heart-searching than was this look of Matilda Perkins—but it was in vain! As well might cannon be expected to startle a

well-trained charger, as such a look to shake the firmness of Lieutenant Foxcroft.

This is a subject painful to dwell upon, and it is enough to say that the two sisters departed by the stage on the morning appointed, without carrying with them any consolation whatever for the imprudent purchase of the blue silk-gown.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE O'DONAGOUGH FAMILY TRAVEL BACK TO LONDON, AND ARE SNUGLY LODGED—A JUDICIOUS EXHORTATION—PATTY TURNS MUSICAL, AND MEETS WITH AN ADVENTURE.

ANOTHER six weeks completed the period for which Mr. O'Donagough considered it advisable to remain at Brighton, and due notice was given to his lady and daughter, that they were to pack up their faded finery and be ready for starting. The O'Donagough policy as to the most advantageous mode of performing a journey, had not undergone any alteration since their arrival, and therefore exactly the same process was gone through to restore them to the metropolis, as that which had brought them from it. Having chosen rather a late coach, they reached the renowned White Bear in very

proper time for dinner; but Mr. O'Donagough, for reasons of his own, preferred ordering luncheon; after which he once more set out in quest of a home for himself and his family. His absence upon this occasion was very short, for it being the latter end of October, lodgings were not difficult to find; and in less time than it would have taken most people to think about it, he had packed himself, his lady, his daughter, and all their baggage into a hackney-coach.

"You must neither grunt nor grumble, turn sulky nor look cross," said Mr. O'Donagough, as soon as the vehicle drove off, "if you don't happen to like the lodgings I have got for you. They are cheap, and that's the reason I take them. I don't intend that you should either see or be seen much for the next two months or so, and I desire that you will make up your minds to it at once."

"What does he say, mama?" inquired the terrified Patty, turning to her mother; for what with the wheels, and the steps, and the windows, she had heard this speech but very im-

perfectly. "What does papa say about our not being seen?"

"Hold your tongue, Patty," being the only answer she received, the young lady turned to the window, let down the glass, and for the next five minutes found great consolation from meditating on the impossibility of not being seen, if she lived in a place where such throngs filled the streets as were then jostling each other before her eyes. At the end of that time the equipage stopped at the door of a small private house in one of the narrow streets that steal away, and hide themselves right and left of the splendours of Regent-street. The aspect of the dwelling was not very inviting from without, nor was the prospect greatly improved when the door opened and displayed its size, colour, and various other properties within. But Mrs. O'Donagough entered, and neither "grunted nor grumbled, turned sulky nor looked cross." Her whole manner and appearance indicated the triumph of reflection over impulse, and of wisdom over weakness. She quietly followed the dirty little

maid who opened for her the front-parlour door, and permitted her eye to take a catalogue of all it contained, without suffering her tongue to utter a syllable of commentary thereon.

Not so Miss Patty. The contrast between this dwelling and that she had left at Brighton, was "too much for her strength," and she exclaimed in no whispered accents,

"Mercy upon us, mama! You don't mean that we should live here?"

Fortunately, Mr. O'Donagough was as that moment wholly occupied in assisting the coachman to drag their trunks and boxes into the narrow passage, which they so completely filled, that he was induced to offer the man an additional sixpence, upon condition of his "giving him a hand" to get them up-stairs to their sleeping-apartments at once, a promptitude of arrangement which was rendered expedient, from the total impossibility that any animal more bulky than the dirty little maid, should get in or out of the house, without climbing over them.

The interval thus occupied, gave Mrs. O'Donagough an opportunity of bestowing a few words of very excellent advice upon her daughter.

"My dear Patty," said she, "there is no doubt in the world that this is the very horridest den that ever man brought a wife and daughter to. And I, too, with such relations as I have! But you see how I bear it, and take my word for it, there is no good in contradicting him just at this time; I am quite sure he has got something or other working in his head that makes it convenient. I don't mean to say, but what if he would trust the whole management of everything to me, I might have contrived to do all he wants done, and kept something like comfort about us besides; but men will be men, Patty, all the world over, worse luck!"

To all this, Patty made no other reply than a grunt.

The evening passed, as such evenings generally do. A family group, placed in lodgings of which the females greatly disapprove, but

which, being chosen by the male, must be endured, seldom manifest any striking symptoms of hilarity.

Fortunately, however, Patty was very sleepy; and fortunately too, perhaps, Mrs. O'Donagough remembered that she had more than one box to open, before all the nightcaps could be found; so it did not last long, and before ten o'clock the eyes of the whole party were closed in sleep, as sound as the circumstances of their location were likely to permit.

Poor Patty's boasted beauty did not show to advantage the next morning, and to do Mr. Allen O'Donagough justice, it must be confessed that he looked at her with some concern. But as his wife had very correctly observed, he *had* something working in his head, which rendered their remaining in obscurity for a month or two exceedingly convenient; and, therefore, being a man of considerable firmness of purpose, he had not the slightest intention of altering his plans, though he perceived that one of the bright eyes he so much admired was almost hid by the swelling which

distressed her cheek, and the other as dull, dim, and heavy, as if the light which usually blazed within it, had been suddenly put out.

But, notwithstanding the steadiness with which he retained his resolution of keeping the ladies of his family in this perfect retirement, he yet felt good-humouredly disposed to support the young lady's spirits under it, if he could, and therefore, while her mother was engaged in the rooms above, he drew a chair towards the recess beside the fire-place, where, in a slippery, tall, horsehair arm-chair, poor Patty sat ensconced, and thus addressed her:—

"You don't like this so well as our gay lodgings at Brighton, do you, darling?"

"What d'ye ask that for, papa?" replied the young lady; "I should think you might guess, without my telling you."

"And so I can, Patty. But you can't guess, I'll bet a guinea you can't, what's going to happen to you next."

The telling such a young lady as Patty, that "something is going to happen to her," almost invariably suggests the idea that she is about

to be married; and so it was in the present case. The swelling on her cheek did not—for, alas! it could not—disappear in a moment, but all other obscurations of her beauty vanished, as she exclaimed, "Good gracious, papa! what can you mean?"

"What have you got in your head now, Patty?" replied her father laughing. "You don't think I am going to give you a husband, do you?"

"How should I know?" returned the pouting Patty.

"No, my darling, it is not that yet," said he, assuming a more serious air, "I wouldn't, for more than I'll say, that my girl should be mated before she has got her best feathers on. You shall be something, and somebody, I can tell you, before I have done. But then you must let me manage matters my own way, my dear. I have had great misfortunes in my time, Patty, or I might have been as rich and as grand as Mr. Stephenson, and that was the reason why I went over to such a cheap and prosperous country as Australia. But things

are going better with me now again, and if you'll be a good girl, and wait patiently, without any expense, till the proper season for gaiety begins, you shall see what I will do for you, and it is not giving up much either, for there is not a single soul in London now."

"My goodness, papa, how you do talk!" replied the indignant Patty, more affected by this last statement than by anything which had preceded it. "Why 'twas a perfect crowd that we drove through last night! and if you would but take lodgings in some street, where I could look out of the window and see the people, I should not care for anything, almost."

"You are too humble-minded by half, my darling," replied Mr. O'Donagough, chucking her under the chin. "You shan't only look at the people, but all the people shall look at you, if you'll let me have my way without grumbling. The people you saw last night, Patty, were nothing but a parcel of clerks and milliners' girls, who have no longer anything to do in their shops, because all the fine folks are out of town."

"I don't care what they were," replied his daughter with great animation, "I am sure they were as handsome and elegant-looking as possible; and at any rate it must be better to see them, than that nasty old dustman there with his horrid bell!"

"Patty!" said her father gravely, "you are not half so quick and clever as I fancied you were. I thought I had made you understand how being careful and saving at one time, could enable one to be grand and gay at another. But you talk now like a mere child, and if you go on so I must treat you as such. I suppose you really are not old enough yet to comprehend the advantage of this sort of management."

"Yes, but I am though," replied Patty, tartly; "and I'll be bound for it, if you would tell me, just once for all, what you will give us to spend in a year, I'd manage to show off with it, quite as well as you, and never set us down in such a nasty, dark, dull place as this, neither."

"*Just once for all,* Patty, won't do for me.

There is no need to enter with you into any long explanation concerning my affairs. Girls can't possibly understand the subject, nor women either, for that matter, because they are never brought up to it. So I hope neither your mother nor you will torment me with any questions, but be contented with what you can get, and thankful that you belong to a man who never leaves a stone unturned if he thinks he can find money under it."

"But I suppose I may walk out, sir?" said the little-pleased Patty, almost blubbering.

"Yes, you may walk, but I should very strongly recommend you both not to show yourselves now, pranked out just as I hope you will appear when I am receiving lords and baronets at my house—you will do yourselves a monstrous deal of harm by it, I can tell you. But I believe it is easier to stop the wind from blowing, than a woman's ribbons from flapping."

At this moment Mrs. O'Donagough entered the room, and instantly perceiving from the countenance of the young lady that something

was wrong, she ventured to say in an accent which did not manifest any decided determination to take part with either,

"What's the matter now?"

"I have only been giving Miss Patty a hint or two as to the patient endurance of a cheap lodging, till I see right and fit to put her into a dear one," said Mr. O'Donagough.

"You had better leave her to me, Donny," replied his lady; "whatever I tell her is right, that she will do."

"That's more than I'll promise, unless I happen to like it," said Patty, recovering her vivacity, and giving so saucy a wink with the eyelid still under her command, as to throw her father into an ecstasy of laughter.

"Come, come, that's all right again; if my beauty does not get into the sulks, we shall get through the next two or three months in no time, and then you shall blaze away, both of you, as you never blazed before," said Mr. O'Donagough; adding in a rather mysterious tone, "You have no notion yet, either of you, what I have got in my head to do for your

pleasure and profit. But if I hear any grumbling it will spoil all, mind that. If you trouble me now, or ever, with questions,—observe, I speak to both of you alike,—if you trouble me now or ever with any questions whatever, about my goings on, or what I mean to do, or what I mean not to do, by Jove, I'll take myself off! You are able to get at your own money now, my Barnaby," he continued in an accent of perfect good-humour, "as well as before you married me, and I give you credit for your cleverness; but one advantage of this is, you know, that you can do without me. Now don't fancy, either of you, that I am angry, or want to get rid of you—for I don't—quite the contrary. If things go as I wish, my wife and daughter will count for something. So come and kiss me, Patty, and remember that the better you behave, the smarter you shall be when the fine folks come to town again."

It would have been difficult for Mr. O'Donagough, or any gentleman under similar circumstances, to have pronounced an harangue more

calculated to obtain the objects he desired. Had he scolded, they would probably have scolded again; had he blustered, they might have rebelled; but promises, threats, and mystery together, formed a chain most admirably calculated to lead ladies captive; and even before any opportunity had been given for them to consult together, both mother and daughter had respectively made up their minds to behave well.

"I think I will sit down at once to my satin stitch, Patty," said Mrs. O'Donagough; "it's always wrong to waste time. That cloak will be perfectly magnificent, if ever I live to finish it, and it is likely enough that it may be useful to you, or to me, one of these days. And if I was you, darling, I'd set about turning that pretty green silk dress that the sea faded so abominably; it will look as good as new, Patty, if you do the job nicely."

"Yes, I will," replied Patty almost meekly, and dutifully turning her steps towards the door to seek the employment suggested; but before she opened it, she ventured to turn her

head and say, "Do you think, mama, we shall be able to get any novels to read?"

"Upon my word, my dear, I don't know," was Mrs. O'Donagough's discreet reply, glancing at the same time a look of civil inquiry towards her husband.

"Novels?—To be sure you may; lots," replied Mr. O'Donagough gaily. "I'm going out, and if you'll sit down to your needles, I'll find out the nearest circulating-library for you, and subscribe for three months."

"And will you bring us back something, papa," said Patty, yawning, as she turned her eyes towards the one window, which, though it commanded an uninterrupted view of the window opposite, had little else to recommend it.

"I will if I can—but you must not expect me directly; I have too much to do to turn errand-boy just now, my beauty. You and your mother can stitch together for an hour or two, I know, without coming to the end of your talk. Why you have got to hash up all that happened at Brighton; and when that's done and over, you may begin upon what you

shall do, and what you shall say, and what you shall put on some three months hence, when you will be living in style and state again," replied Mr. O'Donagough.

Patty shrugged her shoulders, but left the room without a word; strong evidence that his judicious eloquence had not been thrown away upon her. When she returned to it with thimble, needles, cotton-box and scissors in one hand, and a huge mass of miscellaneous trumpery in the other, she found her mama alone, and already deeply occupied by the magnificent cloak.

"Pray do you intend to bear this mama?" said Patty, as soon as she had drawn forward the only moveable table in the room, and placed it near the window. "Do you really intend to go on bearing this quietly?"

"Bear it? How am I to help bearing it?" replied Mrs. O'Donagough sharply. "As if you did not know, girl, that I have no more power to help myself than this needle has. Where I choose to push it there it must go; and where he chooses to put us, there we must

stay; and if you know any cure for it, I hope you will tell me, that's all. Ain't these leaves perfect, Patty?"

"I am sure I shall hang myself if it is to last for three months," rejoined her daughter, without indicating the least emotion at sight of the perfect satin-stitch. "Mind! I give you fair warning, mother; I shall either hang myself or run away."

"And pray, Miss Patty, why do you not tell your papa so, instead of trying to bother me worse than I am bothered already?" demanded Mrs. O'Donagough.

"Why just because you are the gentleman's wife, ma'am, and ought to be able to manage him, to be sure," replied Patty. "But do you think if I was to fall sick, it might do any good?" she added very gravely.

"No, my dear, not the least in the world;" replied her mother. "He's tiresome enough, and tyrant enough too, sometimes; but to give him his due, I don't believe that what he is doing now is for the sake of teasing us. I am sure he means to blaze away, as he says, by and by,

in fine style; and I don't know but he's right, Patty, after all; for I'd rather, ten times over, live hugger-mugger fashion, as we are now, if it's only to last for a time, and then show off afterwards, than go on, on, for ever the same, just decent and respectable, and never making people wonder or admire from first to last."

"Ay, ay, mama, that's all very true, and I understand it just as well as you do; but you'll please to remember that I'm in my teens, and that what's mighty easy to you, is just like death and distraction to me. Mercy upon me! only fancy me staying on, for three months at one go, in a dark linen frock, and without a man, young or old, tall or short, handsome or ugly, to look at me. I know I can't bear it—I know I shall be after some prank or other to help myself."

"I wish you would mind what you are about, Patty, and not talk so wild," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, who, with the increasing wisdom of advancing age, was able to pursue her work tranquilly, even though she too was in a dark linen dress, and conscious that under her pre-

sent circumstances, she could look neither like the beauty she had been, nor the woman of fashion she was. "I wish Patty," said she, "that you would be more steady at your work. Remember, my dear, that you are growing taller and stouter every day; and if you don't mind, you'll notch these turnings in so, in the unpicking, that you'll never be able to make the frock up again big enough to get into. Do mind what you are about."

"Ill tell you what, ma'am," replied the lively girl, "if you take to scolding, I'm off. I'll be hanged if I won't walk up and down the street before the door, if you make this little pig-sty too hot to hold me." And so saying, she pushed her work from her, and throwing up the dusty sash, thrust out her head to reconnoitre the promenade to which she threatened to betake herself.

"My goodness!" she exclaimed, drawing it back again, after taking a melancholy survey up the street and down the street; "what a nasty hideous hole we are got into! The air smells of nothing but dust, and there isn't a

soul to be seen except an old man driving a cabbage cart, and two dogs drawing a barrow with dirty rags and old bottles in it." Yet even these objects appeared to have more attraction for the weary Patty, than the operation of dress-turning; for again she thrust forward her head, and remained for some minutes without changing her attitude. At length she drew back a step, while such a blush suffused her fair and ample cheeks as might have convinced her mama, had she chanced to look up, that something besides the cabbage-cart and the wheelbarrow had met her eye. At the same moment a short sharp knock at the door was keenly audible through the open window.

"That's your father come back, I suppose," said Mrs. O'Donagough.

"No it isn't," replied Patty.

"Did you see who it was then," demanded her mother.

"I saw it was a man, and not a bit like papa," responded the young lady in a whisper, and at the same moment she went to the parlour-door and partially opened it, so as to

permit her peeping out without being herself seen.

"He must be the first-floor lodger, for he came in and went straight up stairs without saying a word," said Patty, retreating from the door with her face in a blaze; "and pretty well he squinted at our door as he passed; but I'm sure he saw nothing of me but my nose."

"I suppose he saw you through the window, miss," said her mama; "but you mustn't stare out into the street that way in London, I can tell you."

"That's because the street is so monstrous gay, I suppose," replied her daughter. "Hadn't you better put me on blinkers, mama?"

"Come, come, Patty, shut down the window, and settle quietly to your work, or upon my life and honour I'll tell your father what a plague you are," said Mrs. O'Donagough.

And much good you'll get by that, won't you, mama," replied Patty. "However, I'll settle down presently if you won't make a fuss; but I must go up stairs first, for I have forgot something;" and so saying, she ran out of the room without waiting for a reply.

The heiress of Mr. O'Donagough was no great songstress; but, for some reason or other, she took it into her head to be musical, as she walked deliberately up the stairs, singing "Cherry ripe," very distinctly, if not very skilfully; and the consequence was, that just as she reached the first-floor landing, the door of the front room opened, and a tall olive-coloured man, with enormous black eyes, and a prodigious quantity of hair to match, became visible at it.

Patty started, ceased her song, somewhat hastened her step, and passed on, but not so rapidly as to be unconscious of her fellow-lodger's politeness; for he bowed profoundly, and looked at her with his widely-opened great eyes, as if he admired her very much. On reaching her own apartment, which was the back room of the second floor, she seated herself with some degree of agitation on her trunk. "Lord, how I wish Matilda Perkins was here!" murmured Patty, as soon as she had, in some degree, recovered her breath and her composure. "I'll bet a guinea she'd make

a good guess in a minute as to what sort of chap that is—what eyes! He's as dark as an Indian, but he's monstrous handsome for all that, and I'm sure he's a gentleman from his bowing so beautifully." This soliloquy was thought, not spoken; and it was silently that Patty sat

Revolving in her altered soul

the possibility of amusing herself, even there, if she could but get at her dear friend to help her. After a few moments thus spent, she arose, determined to attack her mother and her father too, firmly and with proper spirit, on the absolute necessity of her having somebody to speak to, and the atrocity of which they would be guilty, if they would not give her leave to set off that very day for Belle-Vue-terrace, Brompton, in search of her friend Matilda.

In pursuance of this resolution, she re-entered the parlour with a slow and steady step, which had something grave and determined in it. She seated herself silently at the table, resumed her work, and for some minutes

remained opening seams, and picking out threads so demurely, that her mother, though at that moment particularly engaged in newly adjusting her pattern, looked up to see what she was about; but perceiving her serious air, only said, "There's a good girl, just keep on in that way till dinner-time, and the worst part of your job will be over."

"Mama!" said Patty, solemnly, "I am not thinking of my job."

"And why not, for goodness' sake? I'm sure you can think of nothing better, Patty. How beautiful the colour is where the sun hasn't come! You'll have a lovely frock again, if you will only take a little pains."

"It is no good to talk to me of frocks and colours," said Patty, in a voice of sedate melancholy, "while you are making me as miserable as you do now. I am quite sure that I shall do some mischief to myself if you and papa persevere to keep me on in this way, without a single soul to speak to. I tell you fairly, mama, I can't bear it, and I won't."

"What do you expect to get by flying at

me, Patty?" said Mrs. O'Donagough, with considerable symptoms of irritation.

"It is no good putting yourself in a passion, mama," replied Patty, with very impressive quietness. "I am sure I am in no passion myself. What I feel has nothing to do with temper, or anything of the kind. I have been thinking very seriously about it. Everybody must know themselves better than anybody else can know them, and I feel quite sure that I shall not live, or at any rate that I shall go out of my senses if papa goes on with me in this way. I dare say there are many people who could bear it better than I can, and I am sure I wish that I was like them, for papa's sake, and for yours, for I don't want to vex either of you—but I am as nature made me, you know, and I can't help it."

"Good gracious, Patty! How grave and solemn you do talk!" cried Mrs. O'Donagough, looking up at her with all the surprise, and some of the alarm which the young lady had intended to produce. "What on earth would you have me do, my dear? I would

wish to be as watchful over you, as ever mother was—I never did think of myself at any time of my life—everybody that ever knew me would do me the justice to say that, and it is hardly likely that I should be less generous and devoted to my own daughter than to other people; but I no more know how to get you out of this place before your father chooses to take you, than I know how to turn copper into gold."

"It is not altogether the place that I hate so much, mama," replied Patty, "I dare say I should have sense enough to get the better of that; but it is the being so dreadful dull and solitary, without a single friend in the world to speak to. I should be perfectly contented if you would only let me go and see Matilda Perkins."

"I am sure, my dear Patty, I should have no objection if it depended only upon me—though I can't say but what I should feel a little small at being seen in such a place as this by people who have met General Hubert at my house. However, I could easily make

up my mind to bear that for your sake, my dear—and I can't but say it would be a comfort and some sort of relief too, for me to have that good creature, Louisa, to speak to now and then, especially if your father would let me tell her that we were going to be dashing again by and by. But how can I tell what he may say to it, Patty? All I can do is to promise I'll be no spoke in your wheel, and if he chooses to ask my opinion, I'll take care it shall go the right way."

"I'm not going to ask you, mama," responded Patty, with a deep sigh. "I have made up my mind to speak to papa, myself, and I know perfectly well what I shall say to him. But I suppose it will be hours before he comes back. I wish you would put up your work just for a few minutes, mama, and take a turn with me up and down the street. I'm sure I don't care about going any further, I only want a little air. Don't you think it is very close here?"

"Yes, I do, indeed—and when I think of poor dear Brighton, I positively feel half

choked. I really think a little walk will do us both good;" and Mrs. O'Donagough began to roll up her work.

"Very well then," cried Patty, briskly, "I'll run up and put my things on." And this time, as she mounted the stairs, she sang the merrier roundelay of

> I won't be a nun—I can't be a nun,
> I am so fond of pleasure that I must not be a nun.

Again a manly step was heard to traverse the little drawing-room, again the door opened, and once more the olive-coloured stranger appeared at it, respectfully bowing, as before, when he beheld the young lady passing before it. On perceiving this, Patty felt convinced that in common civility she was bound to return the salutation; and she did so by smiling, blushing, shaking her curls, and bowing her head. A quarter of this abounding gratitude would have sufficed to assure the Spanish language-master, for such he was, that not alone the bright vallies of his own sunny land were peopled by dark-browed and very benignant young ladies, but that even the chilling blasts

of the north, could not prevent the effect of a wondering Hidalgo's eyes, if he did but know how to use them.

Having gained her apartment, Patty placed herself before the glass, and laughed at her own blushing image there, as she recollected the looks of profound respect and admiration which it had just called forth. She waited not to consult her mama, as to which of her three bonnets she had best put on, lest her father's doctrine respecting the eligibility of occasionally adopting the obscure incognito style, should be pleaded in mitigation of feathers and flowers; and long before Mrs. O'Donagough's majestic person had reached the altitude at which she herself stood, Patty was already decked in what she considered as her most becoming finery.

"Good gracious! my dear, how smart you are! I had no notion you meant to put on your best bonnet. I am sure if your father sees us, we shall catch it. You know what his notions are about that matter, Patty," said the dutiful wife, and watchful mother.

"I don't care a straw what his notions are, mama," replied her daughter. "When I have got a good thing I shall wear it whenever I think fit. You don't suppose that papa intends to make such a Bessy Dingle of himself as to tell us every morning what clothes we are to put on before night, do you?"

"My goodness, Patty, how you do chop and change about!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough. "Have I not heard you tell him over and over that you admired his plan of being shabby, and saving when we were out of sight?"

"Well; and so I do," answered Patty, colouring a little. "But in London one can never be sure that one is quite out of sight, you know."

Not aware how special an observation this was, Mrs. O'Donagough permitted it to produce considerable effect; for she laid aside a shabby old shawl in which she was about to envelop herself, and substituted one of scarlet, which had been purchased expressly for the Brighton campaign. And now, being fully equipped, they set off; Patty descending the

stairs not only without singing, but without suffering the patter of her feet to be as audible as usual; nevertheless the olive-tinted stranger, who seemed to be the most watchful and attentive of language-masters, heard enough to bring him to his door, and somewhat to the young lady's dismay, his dark visage and enormous eyes appeared exactly at the moment when Mrs. O'Donagough was passing it.

It seemed that the encountering an old lady instead of a young one was more than the gentleman's nerves could stand, for he instantly stepped back and closed the door. "There is some truth in what you say, Patty, about London. One never can tell who may be there, and who may not. I am monstrous glad I have got my scarlet shawl on," were the words uttered by Mrs. O'Donagough, as she descended to the street-door; but they did not all reach the ear of her daughter, and the gentle damsel nestled to the side of her parent, as they commenced their walk, eager to hear the observations which the apparition of the sable head might give rise to.

"He must be an African or a Chinese, Patty, or something of that distant kind I should guess," resumed Mrs. O'Donagough, as they walked on; "yet I can't, for my life, help thinking that he is monstrous handsome, though he *is* so near being a blackamore. Did you get a peep at him?"

"At who, mama?" said Patty, innocently.

"At the lodger on the first floor, my dear. Didn't you see the door open as we came down?"

"I suppose it was while I was running upstairs for my pocket-handkerchief," replied Patty.

"Well then, you must contrive to see him some day or other, child, for it is the most remarkable face I ever beheld; I should not wonder to hear anybody say that he was horridly frightful, and yet for the life of me I can't help thinking him monstrously handsome."

"I am sure, mama, I should like to see him of all things," replied her daughter; "but I don't know how. I can't walk into his room, you know."

"Lor-a-mercy, no!" returned the mother,

with great animation. "I beg and desire, Patty, that you won't speak in any such flighty way about him. I am quite certain he is not the sort of person for any nonsense of that kind. If he lodges in the house, you will be sure to see him, sooner or later, I dare say, without playing any mad pranks to contrive it."

Patty received this rebuke in silence, and walked on. It had been her intention, when inviting her mama to take the air, to cross the street, and parade up and down leisurely on the other side of it; thereby giving an opportunity to the first-floor gentleman to see them out of the window if he liked it; but she was too sensible a girl to persevere in this project now, and they languidly pursued their way to Regent-street, first streaming along to the top of it, and then down again.

Nothing could be a greater proof that the mind of the fair Patty was preoccupied than the indifference with which she gazed into the shop-windows; but with her mother it was otherwise. Notwithstanding the stifling heat and dust of a fine October day in London,

Mrs. O'Donagough's energies all returned, as she contemplated the glories, faded and waning as they were, which every step presented to her view. "Oh, Patty!" she exclaimed at length, "what are you thinking of? Did you ever in all your days see anything so heavenly beautiful as these shops. Just look at those coloured muslins! How they do make one long! Don't they?"

"To be sure they do," replied Patty, roused at last, and throwing, as it were, all her recovered soul through the plate-glass barrier that separated her from the objects in question. "But it makes one sick and miserable to look at them without a single sixpence in one's pocket. I declare I'd rather be dead than going on as I am now!" This melancholy reflection, and her own pathetic expression of it, recalled to the memory of the fair mourner the necessity of managing ably her projected attack upon the heart of her father; and no sooner did she think of this, than the injury which her gay dress might produce, should they chance to meet him, struck her forcibly.

"Let us go home now, mama," said she, in a tone of great depression and fatigue. "Upon my word I am so tired, I can hardly stand." Mrs. O'Donagough could willingly have walked and gazed a while longer, but she yielded to this urgent entreaty, and they returned in time for Patty to prepare herself for the reception of her papa.

There was considerable cleverness displayed in her manner of doing this. She knew she could not turn pale, and she was very sorry for it; but all she could do, she did. She pushed back her redundant locks behind her ears, and made them hang as disconsolately as their nature would permit; she practised before the glass a sort of heavy, heart-broken look, dressed herself in a dirty faded suit, and then crept down stairs so quietly as to escape the keen ears of the Spaniard, whom she by no means wished to encounter in such a trim. Having placed herself in an attitude of great weariness and dejection, she awaited her father's return in such pertinacious stillness that she very nearly fell asleep; but he entered at

a favourable moment, real heaviness assisting that which was assumed, and giving her the appearance of being in a very deplorable condition.

"Mercy on me, Patty! what's the matter with you?" exclaimed Mr. O'Donagough. "I hope," he added, turning to his wife, "that she is not going to have the smallpox, or measles, or anything of that sort! Have you got a headach, my dear?"

"Yes, papa, my head aches very bad," replied Patty, in a gentle voice. "I believe people have always got the headach when they are as miserable as me!"

"Miserable? why what have you been doing to her, Mrs. O'D.? You haven't been scolding and badgering her, I hope? You know I don't approve of it, and I won't have it."

"No, dear papa, that is not it," said Patty, drawing out her pocket-handkerchief, "mama has nothing whatever to do with it; but my very heart is broken, at thinking that I am in London, and can't see the only friend I ever had in the world. I should not mind anything

if you would only let me go and call upon Matilda Perkins!"

Mr. O'Donagough threw a glance round the room, and then at the personal decorations of his wife and daughter.

"Do you really wish, Patty, to let your friends see you in this changed condition?" said he gravely, but without harshness. "When they saw you last, you looked like a duchess; and now, darling, upon my word you look like her housemaid. Don't you think it would be better to wait till we are up again?"

"Wait for three months, papa, without seeing Matilda Perkins? I am sure it will kill me, I am certain that I can't bear it." And here Patty applied her handkerchief to her eyes.

"*I wonder any man alive would ever rear a daughter,*" sang Mr. O'Donagough laughing, and attempting to withdraw the handkerchief from the bright orbs he so greatly admired. "Come, Patty, don't be a fool! Look up, and be a good girl, and we'll contrive some way or other about seeing the Perkinses. But I

must not have all my plots and plans spoiled either, mind that, if you please."

"I am sure I don't want to spoil anything, papa!" replied Patty; "only let me see Matilda, and I'll tell her anything in the world that you like!"

"There's a darling! Very well, Patty, you shall go with your mother, and call upon them to-morrow morning, if you will; only you must dress yourselves nice, and tell them that you came into town entirely to see them, for that you are in lodgings at Richmond, till your London house is ready.—No, no, upon second thoughts, you had better say that we are staying with friends at Richmond, or else perhaps they might expect to be invited. Do you understand, Patty?"

"Yes, papa, perfectly; and I shall like all that very much; a great deal better than letting them suppose that we are actually living in such a place as this. And nothing can be easier, you know, than telling them exactly whatever you please about it; only I shan't at all get the sort of comfort I want if I am only

to go once, and have no place where I may tell Matilda to call upon me in return."

"It is my turn now," said Mrs. O'Donagough. "I have not said a word yet; but if you will listen to me, both of you, I'll engage for it I will manage the business better than either."

"And likely enough, too, my Barnaby," gaily replied her husband, who for some reason or other had returned in excellent spirits. "Likely enough, Patty, she'll beat us both at a plot. So say your say, Mrs. O'D., and let us see how we can contrive to let the beauty have her way without interfering with what I have laid down as firmly as the laws of the Medes and Persians."

"Well, then, Donny, I'll tell you what we must say to the Perkinses. First, we'll begin by letting them know that we have been invited to stay with some very elegant friends at Richmond, and I can put in a word or two about our all enjoying it so very much. And then we'll go on to say that there is but one drawback, which is the inconvenience of the

distance from town just at the time when we have so much to do in preparing a house for the winter and spring; and then I can say that dear Mr. O'Donagough is so dreadfully afraid of my being over-fatigued that he has taken a little bit of an out-of-the-way lodging, just for us to sleep in, whenever it happened that we were too much knocked up by a day's shopping to be able to return to Richmond the same night. And then you know nothing will be easier, at any time, than to fix a day for their calling, by saying, come Monday, come Tuesday, for we have made appointments with tradespeople, which will oblige us to be in town."

"Well done, Barnaby!" exclaimed Mr. O'Donagough, slapping her on the back, and laughing heartily. "Isn't your mother a capital hand, Patty? In that way, my dear, you may see this dear friend of yours, three times in a week, if you like it."

"And I should not make the least objection," observed Mrs. O'Donagough, "to her passing a day or two at a time with them, if they hap-

pened to invite her. The change would do her a deal of good, dear creature; and the Perkinses are such perfectly proper people, that there could be no reason in the world against it."

This was an idea that made Patty's eyes sparkle again, as brightly as before they were rubbed by her pocket-handkerchief; and with such a prospect before her, and a delicious new novel, called "The Doubtful One," to fill up all mental interstices, when her own meditations had been sufficiently indulged, the day passed away without another sigh or groan being heard from her.

CHAPTER XX.

MATILDA IS ONCE MORE RESTORED TO HER PATTY—THE STUBBORN NECESSITIES ATTENDING NOCTURNAL HOSPITALITY PAINFULLY DISPLAYED—ANOTHER ADVENTURE, WHICH BRINGS BACK A LONG ABSENT FRIEND.

As Mrs. O'Donagough herself was very little better acquainted with the general localities of London than her young daughter, there were but two methods by which they could hope to reach the desired bourn of Belle-Vue-terrace, Brompton, in safety; the one being by the guidance of a hackney-coachman—the other, by that of Mr. O'Donagough. The gentleman preferred the latter, as being the least costly of the two; only premising before they set out that they should both of them take such heed to their ways as might suffice to direct their return, he

having business to do, which made it quite impossible he could remain during their visit. This very reasonable condition was readily agreed to, and the conversation *en route* consisted chiefly of observations relative to it.

"Take notice you turn to the right at the bottom of Regent-street."—"Now observe both of you, this is Piccadilly," *et cætera, et cætera.*

At length the street, and the number indicated in Patty's pocket-book were reached, and their anxious inquiries for the Miss Perkinses answered by the agreeable information that they were at home.

Mr. O'Donagough then departed, and his wife and daughter mounted to the drawing-room. The active *grisette* of the mansion, whose lightest labour was that of gentleman woman-usher to the Miss Perkinses, may be excused if she found the difficulties of the name insurmountable, and announced them as Mrs. and Miss Hodnago.

The two sisters who had just had time enough to finish the arrangements, embellishments, and general setting to rights of their little apart-

ment, were sitting very snugly, and in the most lady-like manner, each at her own separate window, each with a little round-table before her, and each employed upon some sort of necessary and important needlework.

On hearing the door opened they both looked up, and on hearing the name of Mrs. and Miss Hodnago, they both made a grimace, and ejaculated,

"Who?"

But ere it could be repeated the glorious vision of their Brighton grandee friend, sailing into the room with all her wonted majesty, and followed by her blooming daughter, met their view; and in the same instant, both sisters, as if moved by springs governed by one wire, clasped their hands, started up, and exclaimed,

"Oh, goodness!"

The only difference was, that the more ardent feelings of the younger propelled her forward with a vehemence which overturned her little table, and brought to view a couple of circulating-library volumes which had nestled amidst

the stockings and frills with which they were covered.

Miss Matilda and Patty were, as may be imagined, speedily locked in each other's arms, nor did Mrs. O'Donagough fail to display her habitually caressing propensities; but, making direct for the slender Louisa, infolded her lank form with an energy that for a moment deprived her of breath. Many and fervent were the exclamations of delight which were uttered as soon as the hugging was over, and the four ladies seemed to vie with each other in the strength of the epithets by which they expressed their ecstasy at this re-union. For some time the eloquence of each was uttered for the good of all; but then Patty began to remember the thousand things she had to say which were calculated for the ear of Matilda alone, and she grew fidgety and restless, till she had contrived to draw her confidant to the most distant part of the small apartment; but even there she was far from being at ease, feeling suspicious that if she spoke loud enough to be heard by her, it was nearly impossible that the others should not hear her too.

"Could you not take me into your own room for a minute, Matilda?" she said abruptly.

"Yes, to be sure, dearest!" replied her faithful friend; "it is only the next door."

And arm-in-arm they prepared to leave the apartment together; when, just as they reached the door, Patty remembered that it would be absolutely necessary that Matilda should be made acquainted with the history invented for the entire use and service of herself and her sister, and conscious that she remembered not one-half of it, she suddenly stopped and said,

"I am going with Matilda into her room for half a minute, mama; but I wish, before we go, you would tell them both all about our being in London and out of it, as one may call it, and all the rest of it, you know, mama, about our beautiful house that we are going to have —because when she and I are together we never speak of anything but our own particular talk, and yet I should like for her to know all about it too."

The quick-witted Mrs. O'Donagough comprehended the state of her daughter's mind in

a moment; and equally pleased by her prudence, and the opportunity it gave herself of indulging a little in the imaginative style of narrative in which she delighted, she replied briskly,

"To be sure I will! I want to tell them both exactly how we are situated. Sit down, dear Matilda, for one minute, and then you shall run off with Patty, if you will."

Matilda expressed, with the warmest gratitude, her earnest desire to hear everything she would be pleased to have the kindness to say; and seating herself close by Patty, took loving possession of her arm, while Mrs. O'Donagough explained "her situation," as she called it, as follows:—

"The fact is, my dear girls," she began, "we want, like many other people of some little consequence in this foolish world, to be in two places at once; and the consequence is, that we can hardly be said to be positively in either. A family of high fashion, distant relations of the Huberts, and therefore of mine, have taken for the summer a magnificent place near Rich-

mond, and nothing will content them but that Mr. O'Donagough, myself, and Patty should pass a month or two with them there. Now most assuredly nothing on earth could be more agreeable than this proposal, if it were not that we have such an immense deal of business upon our hands, in consequence of our determination to take a house, and furnish it from top to bottom. Mr. O'Donagough is a man of great taste, and perhaps rather too fond of magnificence; and I therefore feel it to be absolutely necessary, and quite a duty for me to be with him when he is ordering everything; for if I am not, I feel sure that he will be running into immoderate expense. Not that I have the least wish to prevent his having everything exceedingly elegant about him; a man of his family and fortune, of course, has a right to it, and Heaven forbid that I should wish to prevent it; only, you know, my dears, that there is nothing like a prudent wife for keeping a man out of mischief when he happens to have a decided taste for expense. So I have told O'Donagough fairly, that I will not

give my consent to his taking the house, or purchasing any of the furniture, particularly the mirrors, chandeliers, and so forth, unless I am with him. And I have promised, delightful as our home at Richmond is, that I will constantly come to town once or twice a week for this purpose; and this promise I am determined to keep, however troublesome it may be. But poor dear fellow! he is so excessively kind and affectionate, that he cannot endure the idea of my over-fatiguing myself; and if you will believe me, he has actually taken a little bit of a lodging, where Patty and I may have a bed whenever we feel too tired with our morning's shopping to return with pleasure to our gay party at Richmond. Is not this kind and thoughtful of him?"

"Oh, dear! it's quite beautiful!" exclaimed Miss Louisa, fervently.

"What a husband!" exclaimed Matilda, with a sigh.

"I do assure you, my dears, that the hope of seeing you now and then by this means, is one great reason for my approving it; and poor

dear Patty is quite in raptures with the plan on that account."

"We can never thank you half enough for all your kindness to us," said Miss Matilda, pressing the hand of her friend, and at the same time yielding to a hint, conveyed by a nudge of the elbow, that they might now retire.

"I am so delighted that I have got you to myself once more, my dearest, dearest Patty!" cried Matilda, embracing her friend anew, as soon as she had succeeded in getting her to the little space before the window, which the navigation round the bed rendered no easy task. "Oh, how my heart beats to ask you a few questions! Tell me, dearest girl, did you see much of Foxcroft after we came away?"

"Oh, yes, Matilda—he never missed a day. Papa and he are thicker friends than ever. You'll be sure to see him at our house—that is, you know, when we have got one in town, of our own."

"What a delicious idea! It positively takes my breath away. But tell me, dearest,

for pity's sake, tell me, did he ever speak of me?"

"Lots. He asked more questions, I promise you, than we could answer, about your family and fortune, and whether you had any mother, father, uncles, aunts, brothers, and the Lord knows what. It certainly does look rather particular. But I say, Matilda, is this great large bed all for you? Because if it is, you might give me half of it, you know, some day when papa and mama were gone down to —— what's the name of the place?"

"I wish to goodness it was, dearest! But unfortunately, it is the only bed-room we have. We just take what is called in London the drawing-room floor, and no more," replied her friend.

"So then I suppose that's no go," observed the disappointed Patty, rather gloomily. "However, I have got hundreds of things to say to you, and somehow or other we must contrive to be together. Oh, Matilda! we have got such a man in our house! The house, I mean, where papa has taken the rooms for us to sleep, you

know. Such a man, Matilda, as I never saw in all my born days. Not that he is one quarter as beautiful as my dear Jack; for, in the first place, he is as yellow as a guinea, and his face is almost entirely covered with coal-black hair. But then he has such a beautiful nose, and such a pair of eyes! If I can't show him to you, I shall die."

"Alas, dearest Patty! there is but one I care for now. Talk to me of my poor Foxcroft, if you love me! Tell me how he looks?"

"Looks, my dear? Why he looks much as usual, I believe. Don't be angry, Matilda; but I can't, for the life of me, think how you came to fall in love with such a red nose as he has got, and ever so much gray in his hair besides."

Miss Matilda Perkins coloured violently, and for one moment there was danger that the wounded spirit might burst forth, and utter words which would have smothered and destroyed the friendship which united them—for ever! But better, calmer, wiser thoughts suc-

ceeded, and ere Patty could be quite sure that her dear Matilda was in a passion, that tender-hearted creature had so far conquered her emotion, as to produce a little nervous titter, and reply,

"What is one man's meat, you know, my dear, is another man's poison. It would be very dreadful, Patty, if we all thought alike about people. Good gracious! what would have become of me if all men saw with young Mr. Compton Hubert's eyes, for instance? In that case, poor dear Foxcroft's eyes would never have been turned my way; and yet you must allow, my darling girl, that he seemed to admire me most?"

There was upon the very little table which stood in the window of the Miss Perkinses' bed-room a very little looking-glass, and upon this Patty silently turned a sidelong glance before she answered her friend's appeal, and then, with all the good-humour which a broad grin could convey, she replied,

"Oh! to be sure, Matilda. How could he help it?"

But ere this was uttered, the rapid action of thought had restored to Matilda the entire possession of her senses. She

> ——————— found her fair soul,
> And so to find,

of necessity rendered it impossible to quarrel with her friend.

"Ah! you beautiful wicked little creature," she said, playfully laying a forefinger on each of Patty's rosy cheeks; "you know well enough that as for beauty, there is not one girl in ten thousand that can be compared to you; but the goodness of Providence is too great, Patty, to let all men fix their hearts on one, let her be ever so beautiful, and that is the reason why, as they say, every Jack can find his Gill. Such as you, Patty, to be sure, may pick and choose; but a poor good sort of a warm-hearted girl like me, ought to, and always does, receive gratefully the love of a generous and affectionate man, even if he does happen to have a large nose, and a few gray hairs into the bargain. But don't let us talk any more of me. Tell me, darling, all that has happened to you since

we parted. Did you go on with the three walks every day upon the pier?"

"Good gracious! no, Matilda. How could I, with nobody on earth to walk with? That's the plague of it now, you see. Papa talks of London being empty—but lor-a-mercy! I only wish that I could get acquainted with just one out of every twenty of the well-dressed, elegant-looking people I meet: I could get up a ball in no time. Will you believe it, Matilda, I have never danced a step, so fond as I am of it, since I came to England? and I did think that when we got to London, I should get a dance now and then. But one might just as well be in the woods for anything I see."

"It is a dreadful dull season, my dear, just now," replied her friend; "but when you get into your fine new house in London, Patty, you will have dancing enough, I'll engage for it. Do you waltz, dearest?"

"No, I never learned—but mama says I shall," replied Patty.

"I dote upon waltzing!" resumed the animated Matilda. "I would not confess as

much to all the world, Patty; but I have been taking lessons since—since I was grown up, and I should so delight in teaching you!"

"Oh! I am to have a man-master, mama says; but I should like well enough to practise the steps with you first. How hard it is that we cannot be together!" observed Patty.

"And what walks we could have together!" responded her friend. "Have you been to hear the band play at the Horse Guards yet, my dear?"

"My goodness, no! I have heard nothing, and seen nothing, either, except my beautiful black and yellow man in the drawing-room," said Patty, mournfully.

"How we could enjoy ourselves, to be sure!" resumed Matilda. "There are a hundred and fifty things that we could do and see together. I wonder if Louisa—" she added, musingly; but there she stopped, and Patty stood anxiously watching her lips, to catch what might pass them next; for she guessed in a moment that her friend was revolving the possibility of

turning her elder sister out of bed to make room for her.

"Dearest Matilda! tell me what you are thinking of?" burst from her at last—for Matilda still pondered silently on the difficulties of the case.

"Come back into the drawing-room, Patty," she said at length, in a voice that betokened doubt and agitation, "and let me bring Louisa in here, to speak to her for one minute;" and as she spoke, she made her way round the bed-post, Patty following in silence.

"There is somebody wants to speak to you, Louisa; will you step out for a moment?" said the younger to the elder sister: and though she meant to speak in a tone of great indifference and composure, there was something in her manner which made Miss Louisa instantly jump up, though Mrs. O'Donagough was in the midst of a most interesting description of the splendour of the Peters' family, and exclaim as she left the room,

"Goodness, Matilda! what is the matter?"

"Matter, my dear! How foolish you are!

There is nothing at all the matter; only I wanted to ask you, Louisa, if you thought it possible that you could sleep for a night or two on the little sofa in the drawing-room. This dear girl is so longing to come to us! and I *know* the connexion to be so immensely important to us both; but of course, particularly to me, Louisa, because of their great intimacy with poor dear Foxcroft. Do you think you could manage it? Patty says she is certain that he will be continually with them for he is going to be quartered close to London. Oh, Louisa, think what I must feel! Tell me, do you think it possible?"

"The sofa is so very small," said the gentle Louisa, piteously, "that I certainly don't think I could lie down upon it in any way whatever; but I'm sure I would not stand in your way for the world about Captain Foxcroft; only you know he is not in town yet, and I am so very apt to catch cold, if I don't lie warm and comfortable."

"You don't understand my object," returned the vexed Matilda. "I know he is not in town

yet, and may not be for months to come; but it is cultivating the intimacy with the O'Donagoughs that ought to be our great object now, and I see as plain as possible that for some reason or other it would be convenient for Patty to be left here for a day or two. Think, Louisa, what it will be, when they have a house in town, for them to feel that they have been under an obligation to us!"

"I would sooner put them under an obligation in any other way, rather than have no bed to lie on," replied poor Louisa, with a sort of prophetic shiver.

"Very well, then, that matter's settled, and I dare say I shall never set my eyes on Foxcroft again!" cried Matilda with strong emotion.

"Go back to them, Louisa, and say that I am not quite well. I cannot bear to meet the disappointed looks of poor Patty."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! what a sad business it always is about a bed to be sure! I wish with all my heart that my poor legs were not so long, and then I should not mind it," returned Louisa, with a melancholy aspect. "You are

a good bit shorter than me, Matilda," she added, with sudden animation, "and as your heart is so much in it, perhaps you would not mind sleeping upon the little sofa yourself."

"Not the least in the world, Louisa. I am sure I would do that or anything else, to please such friends as the O'Donagoughs; but to tell you the truth, I did not think that Patty would like to sleep with you, so well as with me. You know you have never been on the same sort of footing with her, and I thought she would like to have all her little gossip out with me, before we get up of a morning."

"That's very likely, sister; but I don't think it is quite fair to lay such store upon it. Beggars can't always be choosers, you know," said Louisa, with a little approach to asperity.

"Beggars! beggars, Louisa!" ejaculated the greatly-shocked Matilda, in a sort of whispered scream, for she trembled at the idea of such a phrase being overheard by the aristocratic and high-minded Mrs. O'Donagough. "How can you use such frightful, such ungrateful language?"

"Well, my dear, say no more about it; ask your young friend to come, and we will manage with her as well as we can. Perhaps you can let me have the mattress out, Matilda, and one of the blankets, and then I could sleep very well, I dare say, on the drawing-room carpet. I am sure I would not stand in your way for the world, my dear, especially if you think it would make any difference about Captain Foxcroft."

This was said with the revulsion of feeling which good-natured people often show, when thinking that they have been rather cross, and it was received by the younger sister with a rapture of gratitude.

"That is just like yourself, Louisa! You are a perfect angel in temper, and I am sure you might have your choice among captains and majors too, if the men did but know their own interest. But if I *do* succeed this time, and I feel as if something whispered me that I should, if I do become Mrs. Foxcroft, you will have a brother, who will be ready to repay all your kindness, and if I did not know that, I am sure I would never think of him."

The sisters then returned with all speed to the drawing-room, where Mrs. O'Donagough and Patty had been employed in looking out of the window, and in muttering to each other their hopes and their fears concerning the result of the consultation; Patty having communicated her convictions respecting its subject to her mama, concluding with a remark, that if she were asked, she should certainly stay, whether her papa liked it or not.

"He did not say a word when you mentioned it, I marked that," said she; "but I'll make him say yes, if he's asked, or I'll know the reason why."

"My dearest Mrs. O'Donagough!" said Matilda, passing her sister at the door of the room, and approaching the majestic lady, she addressed with clasped hands and beseeching eyes: "My dearest Mrs. O'Donagough! I have the very greatest favour in the world to beg of you, and if you will but grant it, I shall be grateful to you for ever and for ever!"

"And what may that be, Miss Matilda?" said Mrs. O'Donagough, with a condescending and very gracious smile.

"I hope you will not think me too bold and presuming," replied the fair spinster; "but my sister and I should be *so* delighted, if you would let Miss O'Donagough pass a few days with us. Will you grant us this great pleasure, my dear ma'am? We will take the best possible care of her, you may depend upon it."

"You are very kind, I am sure," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, with a little laugh that seemed to say that the proposal was very droll, and very unexpected. "What do you say to it, Patty?"

"Oh, mama, I should like it of all things!" replied the young lady, hanging herself in her usual affectionate manner on the arm of her friend. "There is nobody in the world that I love so well as Matilda Perkins, and I shall dote upon staying with her."

"Well then, I suppose we must go home and ask papa," rejoined her mother.

"What, my dear madam, go home to Richmond, and take dear Patty too, before we can can get your answer! Oh, dear me, that will make it so long!"

"No, no, my dear Matilda, I do not mean

that at all," replied Mrs. O'Donagough, laughing. "I have got such a trick of calling every place *home*, which I am going back to, if it is only for five minutes. But I'll tell you, my dear, how you may be very useful, and get an answer about Patty, and perhaps take possession of her, all under one. The truth is, that Mr. O'Donagough brought us to your door, but was obliged to run away directly, on account of having Lord—Lord—Mercy on me! I forget the name. But he had Lord somebody or other to meet. It is certain that he gave me the most exact directions possible, how to find the way back to the rooms where we put up when we come from Richmond; but if you'll believe me, I don't remember a single word of it. So I shall be monstrously glad, Matilda, if you will walk back with us."

"To be sure I will, with the very greatest pleasure," replied the delighted Matilda.

"And then, you know, if Donny is at home, we can ask for Patty's leave of absence, and if it is granted, why she may go back with you at once. I will take care to send her things after her."

This plan seemed to give universal satisfaction; for Miss Louisa, though invited to join the walking party, declined it, from feeling that she should thereby lose an excellent opportunity for making all domestic preparations; and Mrs. O'Donagough, her daughter, and her daughter's friend, set off for the incongruous purlieus of majestic Regent-street together.

In happy conformity to their wishes, they found that Mr. O'Donagough had just entered the house. No time was lost in making their petition, no time was lost in granting it; and within a minute afterwards, Patty was dragging her friend up the narrow stairs, in order, as she said, that she might help her put up the things that were to be sent after her. But after mounting about a dozen stairs, the young lady paused, and whispered in her friend's ear, "Now, Matilda, if my blackbird is in his cage, I will show you what I can do by a song. *Cherry ripe, cherry ripe, ripe, ripe cherry,*" carolled Patty in very audible notes as she slowly mounted the last stairs leading to the drawing-room; and, as she expected, the door

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The first floor is very polite to Miss Polly & Miss Amelia

opened, and the apparition of the black head and yellow face was again visible at it. Patty started, ceased her song, and dropped the parasol she held in her hand.

"*Permettez moi,*" said the Spaniard, darting forward, and speaking in the universal jargon by which all nations seem to fancy they can be best understood, "*charmante donzella! permettez moi;*" and picking up the parasol, he presented it to her with a fascinating bow, at the same time permitting his great eyes to "look their fill," both at herself and her friend.

"Thank you, sir. You are very polite," said Patty, colouring; and having received her parasol with more than one smiling bow, she galloped up stairs, followed by her friend.

"Well, Matilda?" said she, closing the door as soon as they had entered her room.

"Oh, Patty! He *is* yellow to be sure. You don't mean to say that he is as well-looking as Foxcroft?" was the unsatisfactory reply to this eager appeal.

"Well, then, you *are* in love," said the dis-

appointed Patty; "but at any rate, Matilda, you can tell me if you think he is a real gentleman?"

"Why, my dear girl, if I was you, I would not make any further acquaintance with him, unknown to your papa and mama. I have lived in London so long, that I am rather used to see those kind of people, and I don't believe they are always gentlemen of rank and fortune," replied the discreet Matilda.

"Oh! as to that, I have made no acquaintance with him at all, as yet, please to observe —and there's no likelihood I should, if I am going to stay with you. But as to handsomeness, he's beautiful enough for a king, and that I'll stand to, say what you will. But come along—that's all the finery I shall want, and mama can put out the other things. I long for you and I to be walking by ourselves, and then we can talk and look about us as much as we like."

"Won't you rest yourselves before you set out again?" said Mr. O'Donagough, upon their re-entering the parlour to say adieu.

"Oh no, thankye, papa. We are not the least tired; are we Matilda?" replied Patty.

"No, not the least," added her acquiescent friend; and after a few words between the mother and daughter respecting the packet of clothes which was to follow, and a proper proportion of kissing and hand-shaking, the young ladies set off on their walk back to Brompton.

"Are you quite sure you are not tired, Patty?" inquired Matilda, as soon as they got into Regent-street.

"Not a bit," replied Patty, sturdily.

"Then let us cross Piccadilly, and walk down St. James's-street," said her friend. "I never come to this part of the town, if I can help it, without just taking a peep at that dear St. James's Park. I really think it is the most beautiful place upon earth."

The well-assorted friends had proceeded about halfway down St. James's-street, when their four eyes were pleasantly struck by the appearance of two young guardsmen in full regimentals, who issued from the coffee-house at the bottom of the street, and walked up the

pavement towards them. A silent pressure of the arm, given and returned between the two ladies, did all, and perhaps more than all that was necessary for directing each other's attention to the interesting spectacle; and they walked on together with a step, perhaps rather more dignified and measured than usual, but with great decorum, and without exchanging a word.

Both the young men were tall and handsome, and neither of the young ladies refused them the passing tribute of a stare. But what was the astonishment of the well-behaved Miss Matilda Perkins, when she felt the arm of her young friend suddenly withdrawn, and saw her stand with outstretched hands and starting eyes on the middle of the pavement, gazing on the features of one of the gentlemen, as if turned to stone by some male gorgon. The young guardsman, however, who was in earnest conversation with his companion, did not notice her, and pursuing their course, they presently turned together into a shop.

The petrified Patty then appeared, in some

degree, to recover herself, and grasping convulsively the arm of her friend, heaved a sort of gasping sigh, and distinctly uttered the monosyllable "JACK!"

CHAPTER XXI.

AN ENCOUNTER, EMBARRASSING ON THE ONE SIDE AND AGITATING ON THE OTHER — A TRIAL OF FRIENDSHIP — AN IMPUDENT MANŒUVRE, AND A WISE RESOLUTION.

"GRACIOUS Heaven! you don't say so," cried the sympathizing Matilda, entering at once into the nature of her friend's feelings. "This is a most wonderful discovery, indeed! But you must compose yourself, my dear girl, you must really! Lean on me, Patty, and walk gently on. When we pass the shop, you know, you may just look in; and if you can catch his face, you will be able to satisfy yourself whether you may not have made some mistake."

"Mistake!" shouted Patty. "Do you think I don't know him? Do you think, after all I have told you, that I should not know my darling Jack amongst a million?"

"But I am quite sure, Patty, that the gentleman did not know you."

"Stuff and nonsense! How should he know me, when he was chattering as fast as he could speak to that other fellow, and never turned his eyes my way? But you don't suppose I mean to part so? I shall go in after him, I promise you, and then you shall see whether he knows me or not."

"For Heaven's sake, Patty, don't follow two gentlemen in that way!" said Matilda, really frightened. "It is a saddler's shop, my dear girl, and nothing but men ever do go into it. We shall be taken for something very *very* bad, indeed we shall!"

But Patty, without paying the slightest attention to her remonstrance, continued to drag her on, and on reaching the shop-door, without uttering another syllable of warning, she fairly pulled her in, marching straight forward to the back of the shop, where stood *the chase* in earnest examination of a set of harness.

Patty's object was at that moment not so much to speak to him, as to make him see her,

and this she at length effected, by dauntlessly walking round his very elegant-looking companion, and finally stationing herself within about half a foot of his person.

Startled at this sudden vicinity of female drapery, the young man looked up, and his countenance most unequivocally acknowledged acquaintance with the remarkable figure that stood before him. Hot and agitated, her showy bonnet pushed backwards till it was almost off her head, her colour crimson, and her eyes extended with no mitigated stare, poor Patty really looked very far from respectable; while her terrified companion, whose more decent appearance and sober demeanour, might have been some protection, retreated towards the door, utterly incapable of braving a scene, which she thought likely to prove so exceedingly disagreeable. Neither her absence, nor presence, however, were capable of producing any great effect on the catastrophe. Patty's acquaintance no sooner set his eyes upon her, than, with a complexion as glowing as her own, he suddenly dropped the article he

had been examining, and abruptly seizing her hand, led her through the shop, and into the street, without speaking a word.

With an agitated and hurried step he urged her forward some paces past the door, and then pausing, and changing the grasp he held of her hand for the usual salutation of a friendly greeting, he said, "My dear Miss O'Donagough, I sincerely hope I see you well—and truly glad should I have been to have shaken hands with you under other circumstances; but your referring to our acquaintance on board ship before the friend with whom you saw me, or indeed before any friend I have, would be very mischievous to me—and I remember your former kindness too well, not to feel certain that you would be sincerely grieved to do me the injury, which would inevitably ensue, were you to betray me."

"Betray you, Jack!" replied Patty, very innocently. "Good gracious, no! I would not do you any harm for the whole world; but you need not be afraid of speaking to me when we are by ourselves, you know. Tell me when

you will come and see me, my dear, dear Jack!" and she grasped the hand which held hers with unscrupulous affection, causing thereby a degree of remorse and embarrassment to the young man, of which, assuredly, she had no idea, and which if expressed to her would have been a mystery past finding out.

Distressed beyond measure, and moreover very firmly held, "Jack" felt himself terribly at a loss to know what he had best do or say next; a puzzle which was rather increased than diminished, when on casting his eyes towards the door of the shop he had left, he beheld his friend stationed there, and looking towards him, evidently prevented from following him, by a species of discretion most terribly injurious to the poor, unsuspicious girl, whose natural joy at meeting him again had thus undeservedly betrayed her into a situation calculated to excite the most disgraceful suspicions.

"Jack" was, or rather perhaps had been, a very harem-scarem sort of youth, but by no means framed to endure with composure the

idea of producing serious mischief to a young girl, innocent of everything, save a good-natured and friendly recognition of himself.

After the struggle and meditation of a moment, he said, "I will come and see you, my dear Miss Patty. Tell me where you are, and I will call upon you."

Patty immediately drew forth her little pocket-book, and tearing out a leaf on which she had written her friend Matilda's address before they parted at Brighton, presented it to him.

"I am not with papa and mama now, but visiting a friend," said she, as she put it into his hands.

Greatly relieved by this intelligence, and choosing what appeared to him a lesser evil, in order to avoid a greater, he once more permitted her to see the smile which had so awakened her young susceptibilities, and said,

"That being the case, dear Patty, I shall come and see you with the greatest pleasure; but you must promise not to mention having met me either to father or mother. I grieve

for the necessity which obliges me to impose such uncivil conditions, but I cannot help thinking that when I assure you this mystery is essential to my interest, you will not refuse to comply with them."

Nothing could be farther from the delighted Patty's thoughts than making any difficulty about the matter, and perhaps at the bottom of her heart she was rather glad than otherwise that she was to be his only confidant.

"I won't say a single word or syllable to either of them," she answered with great eagerness: "it was always you and me that was the great friends, you know, Jack, and so we shall be still: shan't we? But tell me what your real name is before you go. It is not Jack now, I'll bet: it is something that begins with an S, mama says, because she saw it on the silver fork."

The young man coloured, and laughed. "You must call me Mr. Steady, now Patty. Good bye, I shall be sure to call on you tomorrow at two o'clock exactly. Good bye!" And again shaking her hand, he withdrew,

making her, as he departed, a very respectful bow, for the benefit of his friend, to whom he pledged his word and honour on rejoining him that the young lady he had been talking to was perfectly respectable, and in fact hardly more than a child, whatever he might think to the contrary.

Patty's first action upon his leaving her, was to clap her hands, which might be interpreted either as a symptom of violent and irrepressible joy, or as a signal to her friend, who was by this time at a considerable distance in advance of her. Miss Matilda Perkins was indeed in a state of very great agitation; and a little forgetful, perhaps, of the duties which her superior age imposed, and which might be thought to include the necessity of not leaving her dear young friend alone under such circumstances, she had pushed onward with all her might, and had by this time nearly reached the top of St. James's-street, relaxing her speed, however, a little before she turned into the vortex of Piccadilly, in which she suddenly remembered that the highly-connected Miss O'Donagough might

possibly look for her in vain. She had not, in truth, the courage to turn her head; being persuaded that if she did, she might be involved as a party in an adventure of which, having "dwelt in decencies" for nearly six-and-thirty years, she was very heartily ashamed.

Patty, perceiving that there was some danger of her being left alone in the street, shouted the name of "Matilda!" with all the strength of her lungs, and then set off at full gallop, equally regardless of the elbows or the eyes she encountered.

"What *do* you run away for at such a rate, Matilda?" cried the panting girl, overtaking her, and once more seizing upon her arm. "What a fool you must be, to be sure! Why what in the name of wonder did you think was going to happen to you?"

"Oh! nothing, my dear," replied Miss Matilda, recovering herself on perceiving that the young lady was alone. "Of course you know, I could not think there was anything going to happen to me. Whatever notice I get from

gentlemen, my dear Patty, is in a very different way from being spoken to by strangers in the streets. Good heaven! what would poor dear Foxcroft say if he should hear of my being seen following officers into a saddler's shop, in St. James's-street.

"I would not have believed, if I hadn't seen it, that you could be such an excessive idiot, Matilda!" replied Patty, with some little warmth. "Do you call Jack a stranger? As for that matter, I am sure you are much more a stranger to me than he is. Dear, darling, delightful, lovely Jack! How I do adore him! And he shall find too, that I am as true-hearted and faithful a girl as ever was. Why didn't you look at him, you great goose? You never in all your born days beheld anything one-half so handsome."

"Well, my dearest Patty; now my fright is over, I wish you joy of meeting him with all my heart," said her companion, who recollected how exceedingly important to all her own dearest hopes, was the continued affection of her youthful friend. "You must not be angry

with me, darling, for being a little frightened at first. You don't know how particular London people are! I do assure you, that if anybody had seen us go into that shop after those gentlemen, it would have been thought perfectly improper and unladylike. And besides, my dear girl, I do believe that when a woman's heart is so completely devoted as mine, it makes them always most scrupulously particular in everything they do about other men. I really should have felt that I was acting ungenerously by Foxcroft if I had not come away."

"All that may be very fine, and very right and proper for you. I really don't know anything at all about middle-aged people like you and Captain Foxcroft. But if you fancy that I shall ever meet my own darling Jack, without speaking to him, you are quite entirely mistaken. I don't care a straw whether it is a saddler's shop, or a devil's shop. Jack is Jack to me, all the world over."

"Of course, my dear, he is an acquaintance of yours, and that makes all the difference; and

I hope, my dearest girl, that he told you his name."

"To be sure he did, dear fellow! His name is Steady, and he is to come and call upon me at your house exactly at two o'clock to-morrow."

"Is he indeed? then we must just tell my sister Louisa, if you please Patty, that Mr. Steady is a friend of your papa's, and don't mention anything about St. James's-street."

"I don't care half a farthing what you tell her, Matilda. You may say that he is one of my mother's fine cousins, if you will. Now that I have found him again, I don't care for any earthly thing beside," replied Patty. "But, by the by," she added, drawing closer to her companion, and speaking with an air of mystery, "there is a secret about him that he won't tell to anybody but me. Dear darling! I'll keep his secret, you see if I don't."

"Of course you will, Patty, if he confides it to you. And I must say, that the glance I had of him showed plainly enough that he was somebody. But if he tells you the secret about

his disguise on board ship, and all that, there is no doubt but he will tell it to your mama and your papa too," rejoined Miss Matilda.

"No, but he won't though!" cried Patty, exultingly. "He told me, dear fellow! that he had very particular reasons indeed for not letting them know anything about it, and you don't think I am going to be such a monster as to betray him? That's just what he said himself, dear creature, 'You won't betray me, Patty,' said he; and I'll see father, mother, uncles, aunts, and cousins too, every one of them, in the Red Sea before I'd hurt a hair of his beautiful head. I can't help your knowing it, Matilda, because I had told you everything before, and that I must make him understand; unless, indeed, you could be clever enough, and kind enough to take yourself off, and your wise sister too, just before two o'clock to-morrow. I had rather five hundred times see him alone, and then he'll tell me lots more about himself I'll be bound. Do you think you could get her out, and keep away for an hour or two Matilda?"

This proposal very considerably embarrassed the fair individual to whom it was addressed. To disoblige Miss O'Donagough, or in any way to check the intimacy from which she hoped to derive advantages so very essential to her own happiness, was not to be thought of. Yet there was something that rather frightened her in the notion of leaving her friend Patty so entirely to her own discretion as she now proposed; and without answering very explicitly, she only pressed the arm that rested on hers with the caressing fondness so usual between them, and muttered something about its ever being, she was sure, her greatest delight to please her dear Patty in all things.

"That won't do, Matilda," cried Patty, suddenly standing stock-still, and very nearly overturning a butcher's tray, intended to swing innoxiously round her as she passed. "That sort of answer is not worth a pin. I really have a monstrous deal that I want to say to my own dear Jack Steady, and there is more still that I want to have him say to me, and I

feel most positively sure that he will be quite glum if there is anybody by but me to hear him. I'm sure, Matilda, I shall always be ready to do as I'd be done by, and I promise faithfully, upon my word and honour, that if you will but go out to-morrow at two o'clock, and take your sister Louisa along with you, I will contrive to let you have a *tête-à-tête* in our drawing-room with Foxcroft, for just as long as you like, as soon as ever papa has got his nice new house, you know. For papa says he is quite sure that Foxcroft will contrive to get leave of absence on account of his health, or for some excuse or other. He is quite sure of it. So you see, Matilda, that if you will do what I tell you, there is no need that I should be long in your debt."

The argument thus urged went straight to the heart of Miss Matilda. "Well, my dear," she replied, "I will see what I can do—but Louisa, of course, is her own mistress, and if she does not choose to take a walk just at that time, you know I can't make her."

"But I know that you can," replied Patty,

sharply; "as if I had not seen you come over her hundreds and hundreds of times! And when she has set off with saying, 'I don't think I *can* do *that*, Matilda,' haven't I heard her end at last by, 'Well, to be sure, I dare say you know what is best, my dear!'"

This being said in Patty's best style of mimicry, it produced the accustomed meed of admiration from her friend, testified as usual by an assurance that she never did, no, never in her life, hear such a mimic! But ere this oft-recurring expression was well spoken, Patty suddenly stood still, and having a tight hold of Miss Matilda's arm, caused her to stand still also.

"What is the matter, my dear?" demanded the elder lady.

"Matter!" ejaculated the younger one. "I certainly shall go distracted, that's all—I certainly shall, Matilda, if you don't turn back this very instant, and scud along with me to my own bedroom as fast as your legs can carry you."

"What for, my dear? Shan't we be *very*

tired, Patty?" demanded Matilda, in a languid voice.

"Tired! What signifies being tired, I should like to know, compared to my not having one single bit of any ribbon for my neck, or my waist, or my wrists, but that ugly dark blue that papa bought at Brighton? They make such a fuss, both of 'em, about my not spending too much money in ribbons, that I am obliged to be as stingy as a miser over my best, and that's the reason I left all my pink pinned up safe in silver paper in my drawer. I know it couldn't make any great difference with you and your sister whether my skin looked better or worse;—but Jack! I vow and declare I would not let Jack come and see me in those nasty, hideous, narrow blue bows, if you'd give me a thousand pounds!"

"I do assure you, Patty," replied her friend, "that you *can't* look more beautiful in anything than you do in those identical blue ribbons. I have said so to Louisa scores of times."

"Come along, my dear!" was the only reply

which the steadfast-minded Miss O'Donagough made to this friendly assurance, and being considerably the stronger of the two, her will proved irresistible, and the two young ladies once more jostled their way along the ever-busy pavement of Piccadilly, and in process of time again reached the O'Donagough lodgings in —— street.

The ample face of Mrs. O'Donagough was perceptible above the blind of the parlour window considerably before Patty's impatient knocking had concluded, and she burst forth upon them into the passage with all the eagerness of maternal anxiety, just as her daughter raised one foot to mount the stairs.

"What in the world is all this for?" demanded Mrs. O'Donagough, laying her hand on the shoulder of Miss Matilda; for by an active movement forward, Patty had escaped her. "What *are* you come back for?"

"Something that Patty wanted out of her drawers," replied the discreet and faithful confidant.

"Good gracious! what a shame to drag you

back all this way! why you might have got home over and over by this time," said Mrs. O'Donagough.

"Oh, dear! the distance is no consequence," replied Matilda; "and you know there is nothing in the world I would not do to please Patty!"

While this passed, the two ladies continued standing at the bottom of the stairs, for Mrs. O'Donagough did not feel altogether sure that her husband, who was in the act of dining upon beefsteaks and onions in the parlour, would be particularly well pleased by a visit from the refined Miss Matilda Perkins—especially as that young lady had been informed that they were to dine at Richmond at seven o'clock. But Patty's business above stairs, proceeded so slowly, that her vexed mother could no longer avoid asking the weary Matilda to sit down.

"You won't mind finding Donny at luncheon, will you?" she said, as she at length threw open the parlour-door. "That silly Patty forgot something or other, and she has

brought Matilda Perkins all the way back from Brompton to fetch it," said Mrs. O'Donagough to her husband, as she entered "but you won't mind her seeing you eat your luncheon, you know, though it is five o'clock."

"You will be shocked by the sight of so substantial a morning meal, my dear Miss Matilda," said the master of the apartment; "but the fact is, Lord Robert has kept me so late at the club, consulting about some private business, which has brought him up to town—and you may guess how delighted he was to see an old friend, at a time when the chances are five hundred to one against his finding a single creature in London—he has kept me so devilish late, that I was absolutely obliged to send out for something solid, before we set off for Richmond."

"What on earth can Patty be about?" exclaimed the hungry Mrs. O'Donagough, impatiently. "There never was such a plague of a girl about her things! What *is* it, Matilda, that she is come back for?"

"I don't quite exactly know," replied Matilda, blushing and altering. "She said she had forgotten something, and wished to come back, and I did not say much about it."

"Do let the girl alone, my dear," said Mr. O'Donagough. "If our charming friend here likes to indulge her little whims, I don't see why you should grumble about it."

"How you do spoil that girl!" retorted his lady, resuming with a bounce her place at the table, and suddenly deciding that she would not be such a fool as to let her beefsteaks get cold for any one. "I do believe, that let her do what she would you would find out some reason or other to prove that she was right."

"She is right now, at any rate," replied the father, looking up as the young lady entered the room, "for I never saw her look better in my life."

"What *did* you come home for, Patty?" cried Mrs. O'Donagough, suspending her well-charged fork within half an inch of her mouth.

"I wanted a pocket-handkerchief, mama," replied the young lady.

"As if Matilda could not have lent you one; I am sure there was something else, so you may as well out with it. What's that you have got in your other hand? Didn't I tell you that I would get the girl of the house to carry your things for you, and what is the use then of dragging through the streets with them yourself?"

"Use, or not use, mama, I shall carry this parcel, because I like to do it; and that I suppose is reason enough, isn't it?"

"What's *in* the parcel, Patty?" persisted her mother, pettishly. "You haven't got hold of my lace-collar, I hope?"

"You take me for a thief, do you? Well, that's civil any how, isn't it, Matilda?" said Patty, with rather an embarrassed laugh. "But come along, or we shall keep Miss Louisa waiting for her dinner," she added, endeavouring to back out of the room without further parley.

"Come and give me a kiss, Patty?" said her father, seized with an unlucky fit of affection.

Till now the young lady had contrived to keep her parcel, if not quite out of sight, at least out of the reach of her mother, by holding it pertinaciously behind her back; but this unwelcome invitation, rendered the manœuvre of none effect, for as she stooped forward to receive the paternal caress, her mama snatched at the parcel, obtained it, tore it mercilessly open, and disclosed sundry ells of bright rose-coloured ribbon, a portion of which was daintily tied up in various sized knots, while the rest floated left and right far and wide, in unrestrained profusion.

"What in the world is all this for?" exclaimed Mrs. O'Donagough, with marked displeasure on her countenance. "Don't you know, Patty, all that has been said about these sort of things? What good is it to talk to you like a reasonable grown-up woman, while you still act like a child? Did not your father pay four and ninepence for these very ribbons, expressly on condition that they should be kept up as best, and worn for nothing but showing off when we wanted you to look as well as pos-

sible? Can you stand there, and tell me that you don't remember this?"

"I am not going to tell you any such thing, Mrs. O'Donagough," replied Patty, in her most rebellious accent, and at the same time glancing at her father for support, for whose especial amusement, she had formed her phrase; but it did not answer, for he was growing more hungry and angry every moment, and turning towards her with unexpected firmness, exclaimed,

"Don't answer your mother like a fool, Miss Patty! What the devil do you want all that finery for?"

"Want it, papa? Lor-a-mercy, doesn't every girl always want all the finery she can get? I am sure if she doesn't she's a fool. Come along, Matilda—" was the not unskilful answer of the beauty, while replacing her ribbons in their paper envelop; but she was disappointed if she fancied that it would satisfy her mama, for Mrs. O'Donagough, turning briskly round to the blushing Matilda, abruptly demanded if they were going to have any company, adding,

"But even if you were, that is no reason why she should gallop back, and ransack the drawers in this way—for these pink ribbons were bought to smarten up a morning-dress, just to call on Mrs. Stephenson, you know, or anything of that sort."

Notwithstanding her advantages in point of age, it was evident that Miss Matilda Perkins could not compete with her young friend, either in courage or in presence of mind; for she hesitated, and looked exceedingly embarrassed as she replied,

"I am not quite sure, Mrs. O'Donagough, about who we are likely to have call upon us of a morning, but dear Patty always likes to be a little smart, you know, before strangers."

"And she'd be the first to scold, if I didn't," subjoined Patty.

Then hastily kissing her father's forehead, as he threw back his head in the act of lifting a porter-pot to his mouth, and nodding "Good bye, mama," to her mother, she bolted out of the room and the house, without running the risk of any further conversation, and was fol-

lowed by her friend, whose usual obsequious civility to Mrs. O'Donagough, was altogether conquered by her dread of being entrapped into the betrayal of Patty's secret.

But though the fair friends succeeded in getting out of the house, and in making their way safely to Belle-Vue-terrace, Brompton, they had not by any means "thoroughly bamboozled" Mrs. O'Donagough, as Patty boldly assured her confidant was the case; for no sooner had the angry lady refreshed herself by a draught of her favourite beverage, than she thus addressed her spouse:

"Don't you see, Donny, as plain as that two and two make four, that these two girls have got some trick in their heads? I'll bet what you please, that if you and I make them a call to-morrow morning, at a genteel visiting-hour, we shall find some *beau* or other there; that Miss Patty is particularly desirous to captivate some of the young lads of the ——, perhaps that they used to meet so constantly on the pier at Brighton—not that I should care a straw for that, if it wasn't that they were both so mighty

shy about talking of it. That looks like mischief, don't it?"

"It is early days, too, to catch Patty out in such a trick as that," replied Mr. O'Donagough. "However, I have no objection to look after her to-morrow morning. But mind, whatever happens, you must leave the whole management of the business to me. Don't let's have any jawing before strangers, for God's sake!"

"That's all fair, my dear; I shan't want to meddle or make, I promise you. But it will do Patty a monstrous deal of good to discover, that with all her cleverness, there are eyes as sharp as her own, though may be not quite so bright."

CHAPTER XXII.

A TETE-A-TETE, AND AN INTERRUPTION — GREAT WANT OF GALLANTRY ON THE PART OF JACK— ENFORCED CONFIDENCE, SUCCEEDED BY VERY FAMILIAR COMPANIONSHIP—A HAPPY LITTLE PARTY.

MEANWHILE the two friends at last reached their destination at Brompton; but not before the veal cutlets and mashed potatoes were very nearly reduced to cinders, and poor Miss Louisa as nearly out of temper as her constitutional tranquillity would permit.

The evening of course passed in alternate mutterings between Miss Matilda and Patty which in style might not inaptly have been compared to those classic eclogues, in which a gentle contest is briskly kept up on rival themes; for "dear, beautiful Jack Steady," on the one side; and "poor, dear Foxcroft," on the other, invariably formed the subject of each

eloquent speaker's volubility. Good Miss Louisa was very little in their way, not seeming in the slightest degree conscious of what they were saying, and to all appearance as completely devoted to the intricate mysteries of some newly-invented knitting, as her companions could be in endeavouring to trace the still subtiler twistings of the human heart.

The following morning looked so brightly inviting, that even the quiet, thimble-loving Miss Louisa, proposed a walk; adding, moreover, with more than usual vivacity, "Suppose, my dears, that we were all to go together to hear the band play? It is such a beautiful walk, turning in at the Green-park, Matilda, you know; and I don't suppose dear Patty ever heard such a band in her life."

The friends exchanged glances and a little closing up of the eyes, and an almost imperceptible shake of the head in each, said plainly to the other, that it would not do at all. It had, indeed, been agreed between them before they left their sleeping apartment (for the uncombative Louisa had resigned herself to the

drawing-room carpet, and a blanket), that Patty must assign an incipient sore throat, as a reason for wishing to stay at home; while Matilda, after the one-o'clock slice of bread-and-butter had been handed round, should request the company of her elder sister upon some errand of importance, to be invented for the nonce, the eligibility of performing which should be further made manifest by pointing out the necessity of not letting poor Patty talk too much.

All this was accordingly performed ably, and received in the best manner possible by Miss Louisa; and at ten minutes before two, Miss O'Donagough was seated alone, and in state, upon the Miss Perkinses' sofa, with every one of her beautiful pink bows exactly in its right place; her black curls, *à la poodle*, wantoning over her comely face, and her eyes shining with more than usual brightness.

Luckily she did not wait long, or it is possible her charming looks might have been injured by impatience. Exactly at two o'clock, the knocker of the house-door gave signal of a

vsiter; an active young step was heard upon the stairs, and in the next moment, the name of "Mr. John Steady" was announced, when Patty's "own darling Jack" stood before her.

The young man, though no longer in regimentals, looked, as she thought, ten thousand times handsomer than ever, and Patty's step to welcome him, was so eager that it brought her to the door, almost before he had fully entered it.

"Oh, my dear Jack!" she exclaimed; "I am so glad you are come! and I have made everybody go out on purpose that we might have a long comfortable talk by ourselves. What a time it is since you set off in that nasty boat for Sheerness! Ain't you glad to see me again, Jack?"

"Most surely I am, my dear Miss Patty," replied the young man; "but you are looking so remarkably well, that I have no occasion to inquire after your health. Have you been in London ever since your arrival?"

"Oh lor, no! not we," replied Patty, seating herself on the sofa, with a hand extended on

each side of her, so as to assist in a sort of jump-for-joy movement with which she relieved the fulness of her heart, while she gazed upon her visiter, as he sat opposite to her. "We staid almost no time in London then, but went down on the top of the coach to Brighton on purpose to see all mama's grand relations; and there they were, lots of 'em, men, women, and children; but there wasn't one of the whole kit, that I liked so well as you, Jack."

"You are exceedingly kind, I am sure," replied the youth, blushing a little, and then stopping, very evidently at a loss what to say next.

"Mercy upon me! I don't call that kind, because I could not help it, you know. You could not like anybody as well as me, Jack, could you?"

"I am sure nobody in the world can deserve to be liked better—because you are always so very good-natured."

"Good-natured! Is that all? Why, I would'nt give a penny for anybody who hadn't more to say for themselves than that! My

goodness, Jack! Do you remember your jumping overboard into the sea? I never shall forget it, the longest day I have to live! And do you remember who it was that brought you to? and then our nice, dear, ship-billiards! Oh, what fun, to be sure! And think of your trying to make us believe that you wasn't a bit better than a common sailor! But I was'nt such a fool as that, anyhow."

"My dear Miss O'Donagough," began Mr. Steady—but the young lady stopped him short—

"Once for all, Jack, I won't be called Miss O'Donagough, or Miss Patty, either, by you. So mind that, if you please, or else you and I shall quarrel, as sure as you sit there. You always used to call me Patty, and Patty I choose to be called; and I shall call you Jack too, unless when we happen to have listeners, and then, I suppose, I must call you Mr. Steady."

The young man seemed to make an effort to look grave, but it was in vain, and he laughed heartily. Without exactly understanding, per-

haps, the cause of his mirth, his companion shared it, and laughed heartily too, till suddenly jumping up, the young lady seized a pair of scissors that lay on the table, and with a hop, skip, and jump, got to the back of Mr. Steady's chair, and stationing herself behind it, said in a voice of authority,

"Eyes front! Mind the word of command, Mr. Jack, or I'll cut your head off, I will, upon my honour."

"What are you going to do, my dear girl?" said the young man, disobeying her commands, and turning himself round to look in her face.

"Do what I bid you," said Patty, "and no harm shall come of it. See here! Don't look so frightened! A fair exchange is no robbery."

And so saying, the lively young lady mercilessly enclosed within "the glittering forceps," one of her own ringlets, which she scrupled not to

——— dissever
From her fair head for ever and for ever.

"There now, Jack! look at that," said she; "isn't it a pretty little curl? and dropping it

rather upon, than into his hand, she seized the moment in which, of necessity his attention was directed to it, and performed the same feat upon a portion of the young man's chestnut tresses, leaving a very cruel gap just over his left ear.

"Now! what d'ye say to that, master Jack? I am the same funny girl that ever I was, ain't I?" said Patty, skipping round in front of him, and exhibiting her prize exultingly held on high.

"Oh, Patty, this is very foolish! What would your mama say, if she could know it?" said the young man rising, and looking very much as if he were disposed to re-exchange the tokens by dint either of stratagem or force. "Come, be a good girl, and throw it away. A fine, tall, young lady as you are now, must not play the same sort of tricks that you used to do when a child."

"Throw it away! And will you throw mine away, Jack? What a brute you must be to think of it!" And Patty very coaxingly approached him, holding fast the treasured lock

Betty interrupted in her tête à tête with Dick

in one hand, while with the other she cleverly caused the one he still held to curl round two of his fingers. "Now, is it not very pretty, Jack?" said she, looking up in his face with a sort of deprecating smile.

"Yes, to be sure it is; and you are very pretty, too, Patty!" said the youth, fairly beat out of his discretion, and unceremoniously saluting the blooming cheek which had placed itself so near him.

At the very moment he did so, and while the not too-greatly incensed Patty was laughing heartily at his audacity, the door opened, and in walked Mr. and Mrs. Allen O'Donagough.

The parties naturally fell into a *tableau*, and for half a minute not a word was spoken; but Patty soon recovered both her courage and her tongue, and though still blushing a rather deeper tint, perhaps, than the celestial rosy red of which the poet sings, she managed to assume an air of very tolerable *nonchalance* as she exclaimed,

"So! you are come to look after me, I sup-

pose; but if you look sharp, perhaps you will see, into the bargain, an old friend with a new face."

Mrs. O'Donagough's first emotion was of a mixed nature, being compounded of one feeling a little approaching to alarm, and another rather nearer still to satisfaction, at discovering her Patty so evidently, according to her notions, the object of a tender passion, and that, too, from a person so pre-eminently elegant in appearance as Mr. John Steady. But the words of the young lady caused her to examine the countenance of the gentleman more attentively, and, ere she had gazed long, her whole attitude and manner changed; a smile of unmixed satisfaction distended her countenance, she laid her hand upon the arm of her husband, and drawing him a step or two forward stopped within a yard of her old acquaintance, exclaiming in a sort of theatrical whisper, intended to be heard with particular distinctness.

"Look there, O'Donagough! Look there, and tell me what you see."

Mr. O'Donagough's demeanour upon seeing

his daughter at a *tête-à-tête* game of romps with a strange man, was by no means so equivocal as that of his lady; for he grew extremely red in the face, and altogether appeared well-inclined to be in a great rage; but the accents of his Barnaby acted like oil on troubled water, his frown relaxed, his colour and his choler became mitigated, and yielding to her gentle influence, he sat about staring the stranger very fixedly in the face.

"Mercy on me! It can't be, can it? It is not possible, to be sure!" were the sentences he uttered rapidly, but with every appearance of satisfaction, in place of his late displeasure. As soon as the last words were spoken, Patty, who watched him narrowly, placed herself in an attitude similar to that of her mother, upon his other arm, and taking upon herself to answer his wondering inquiries, said,

"Yes, but it is possible, papa; and what is more, it is true. It is our own dear Jack, and no other, you may take my word for it."

"And pray, Miss Patty, how did you find him out?" demanded her father, turning his

eyes abruptly from the face of his old acquaintance to that of his daughter, with a look which, though no longer so fierce as before, seemed to express some curiosity, to say the least of it, for a satisfactory explanation. But the forbidden discovery being made, and that without any agency of hers, Miss Patty's difficulties were quite at an end, and without affecting any further mystery, she replied,

"How did I find him out? Why, in the street to be sure, and never was there such a piece of luck! Wasn't it lucky, Jack? Wasn't you delighted to see me?"

It may be remembered that Mrs. O'Donagough herself had never formed any great intimacy with the young shipmate who now stood before her in a guise so wholly different from any in which she had hitherto seen him, yet so precisely accordant to the imaginings which her shrewd suspicions had suggested; her feelings, therefore, upon this unexpected rencounter, were simply those of triumphant sagacity: and it was with a chuckling merriment, very little agreeable to the object of it,

that she continued to gaze upon him from top to toe. Mr. O'Donagough was perhaps even better pleased still; for not only had the discovery removed some exceedingly disagreeable suspicions from his mind, in which his fair daughter was concerned, but, with the keenness of a *professional* eye, he discerned at a glance, that whatever might have been the cause of the masquerading carried on amongst the crew and passengers of the Atalanta, the young man was decidedly of that class of society among which he particularly desired to increase his acquaintance, and this unexpected accident seemed to offer a very excellent opportunity for doing so. Thus the only person in the group who felt not perfectly and pleasantly at ease, was poor Jack himself, and he would gladly have given a joint of his little finger to escape answering Patty's affectionate query, and two perhaps, might the sacrifice have placed him clear of the adventure altogether.

"Wasn't it lucky, Jack?" reiterated Patty, "and ain't we famously caught out with our locks of hair exchanged?" And the young

lady held up to view the shining trophy she had won, while her eyes directed those of her observant papa and mama, to the now considerably-deranged curl which the unfortunate youth still held between his fingers. Luckily for him the necessity of immediately replying to Patty's tough query, was obviated by Mr. O'Donagough's saying, as if in consequence of the intelligence conveyed by the tell-tale locks of hair,

"You will not be surprised, sir, if I now think it right to request you will inform me what your real name may be?"

"Jack is perfectly dumfoundered, poor dear fellow!" exclaimed Patty, laughing; "but I can tell you his name, papa, without plaguing him to speak, if he had rather let it alone. His name is Steady, Mr. John Steady, and that answers to the fork, don't it, mama?"

"Mr. O'Donagough!" said the young man, appearing suddenly to rouse himself with the energy of a newly-formed resolution, "will you give me leave to speak with you alone for five minutes?"

"Gracious goodness! Can it be about marrying her?" thought Mrs. O'Donagough.

"He is going to pop the question as sure as my name's Patty!" inwardly murmured her daughter, unconsciously clapping her hands in the ecstasy of her heart. Mr. O'Donagough himself, however, felt convinced in a moment, from the tone of voice in which the request was made, that the object of it was not his daughter; yet, nevertheless, he had enough of interest and curiosity in the business to answer readily,

"I shall be very happy to hear, sir, whatever you may be pleased to communicate to me;" which assurance was given in Mr. O'Donagough's most respectful and gentlemanlike manner.

"May I attend you to another room, sir?" said the young man.

"Is there any room here, Patty, into which I can show this gentleman?" inquired her father.

"No, that there isn't, papa, except the Perkinses' bedroom, and that's all in a litter, I'll be bound."

"Then we will take a turn in the park, Mr. O'Donagough, if not disagreeable to you," said the young man, taking up his hat, and deliberately laying down poor Patty's ringlet in its place.

Mr. O'Donagough replied only by a bow, and they left the room together.

As the subject matter of the conversation between Patty and her mother may be easily guessed, it is unnecessary to repeat it, and we will therefore follow the two gentlemen into Hyde Park, where, as by mutual consent, they chose a path the least liable to interruption, when the following conversation took place:—

"It can hardly be necessary for me to inform you, Mr. O'Donagough," began the young man, "that folly and frolic must be pleaded in excuse for my having made your acquaintance under false colours."

"I am very glad to hear, my dear sir, that there was no worse cause for it," said the elder gentleman.

"Sir?"—in very haughty accents, was the rejoinder of the younger one.

"I feared it possible," resumed Mr. O'Donagough, in his best manner, "that some unfortunate affair of honour might have rendered a distant expedition necessary, or at least prudent."

"No, sir. Thank Heaven I have nothing so irreparable on my conscience. The history is briefly this:—I was left without father, mother, or any near relative, except a sister still younger than myself, with a large fortune, and a personal guardian, for whom I had conceived a very unjust, but very strong, dislike. For a few years I pursued my studies at Eton, with tolerable propriety I believe; but at the end of that time, my guardian wished me to go to college, while I insisted upon immediately entering the Guards, which produced a quarrel, all the faultiness, and all the violence of which belonged wholly to myself. I am sorry to confess, that it was in the mere wantonness of intentionally giving this excellent friend as much pain and anxiety as I could well devise, that I set off for Australia without communicating to him the slightest intimation of my

intending to leave England at all; and aware that if I went under my own name, he would be likely to get the intelligence from the newspapers, I had the folly to go out in one ship in the character of a mechanic about to seek my fortune in a new world, and return in another, under the semblance, as you know, of a common sailor belonging to the crew. In the latter case, however, I confided a portion of the truth to the captain and crew—partly because I felt it would be impossible to keep up my assumed character with them, on account of my nautical ignorance, and partly, I own, for the sake of arranging the minor particulars of my passage on a more agreeable footing than I had thought it necessary to do in going out. My name, however, it was not necessary to disclose, and I believe I left the ship at Sheerness, without anything more being known of me than that I was a lad with a good deal of money, and a roving sort of disposition, which had led me to take a trip that I did not wish to have known. And this, in fact, was the exact truth. I had one con-

fidant, and one only to this thoughtless frolic; my sister knew where I was gone, and from her I received one letter, directed to me according to my instructions, under a feigned name, to the care of a merchant at Sydney. This letter produced a total revolution in all my feelings respecting my guardian. It described his sufferings on my account, as so much more blended with affection than I had ever believed possible, that my heart was softened, and my spirit sobered at once. But it had never occurred to him that I could have committed any greater folly than the merely keeping myself concealed near London; and as my sister, faithful to the promise I had extorted from her, never betrayed her knowledge of my having quitted England, his regret and his sufferings were wholly occasioned by the idea that he had wounded a too sensitive temper by the assumption of more severe authority than he ought to have shown. 'Come back instantly,' wrote my sister, 'and never let him know the whole extent of your folly.' It was from a wish to follow strictly this advice, that I so

cautiously concealed my name and station; and as he has never since my return asked me a single question respecting my absence, I have never yet recurred to the subject. We are, I am happy to say, on the best possible terms; and though I have been for some months of age, I would have been perfectly willing to atone for past rebellion, by entering myself at Oxford. But of this he would not hear, and convinced, as he kindly says, that my former opposition proceeded from a genuine and decided preference for the profession I was so eager to enter, he himself arranged everything respecting my commission; and I am now, with much better luck than I deserve, in precisely the position I desired, without the mortification of having my boyish escapade bruited from one end of the country to the other. You will perceive, therefore, Mr. O'Donagough, that I have very strong reasons for not wishing to have our meeting on board the Atalanta made known; and I shall hold myself greatly indebted to your courtesy, if you will never, under any circumstances, allude to it,

and shall be grateful, also, if you will use your influence with the ladies of your family to the same effect."

"Depend upon it, my young friend," replied Mr. O'Donagough, in an accent of much kindness, "depend upon it, your secret is perfectly safe with me; nor do I fear the discretion of either my wife or daughter. Patty is as good a girl as ever lived, and with all her high spirits, is as gentle and obedient as a lamb to every wish that either her mother or I seriously express to her—and for *you*, dear Jack!—But this familiar appellation must be used no longer. May I ask, sir, if your name be really Steady?"

"No, sir, it is not," replied the young man colouring.

Mr. O'Donagough said no more, and the silence which ensued was rather awkward. It was the young incognito who broke it, by saying with a good-humoured smile,

"I tax your kindness severely perhaps, Mr. O'Donagough, both by my confidence, and by my want of it. I am, I believe, absurdly

anxious about this concealment, but the fact is, some of the friends whose good opinion I most highly value, fancy that the interval of my absence has left some traces of improvement with me; and my sister assures me that the general belief is, that I have passed my time in profitable reading, whereas, in truth, I have done nothing, save finding a little leisure to reflect. And though I would not, were I questioned, falsify a single passage in my history, I would rather, at least for the present, that things remained as they are. Therefore, Mr. O'Donagough, if you will have the kindness not to urge the disclosure of my name, I shall really feel it as a great obligation."

"Is it your wish then, that we should still call you Mr. Steady?" demanded Mr. O'Donagough, gravely.

This was a trying question; for had the young man answered it sincerely, he could only have said that he trusted no circumstances were likely to occur in which there would be any necessity for his being addressed by him or his family at all. But to utter this, was of

course impossible; and after a moment's hesitation, he replied, "Yes, sir."

Another silence followed, which, like the former one, was at length broken by "Jack."

"I believe, Mr. O'Donagough, that we may now turn back again," said he, "and I beg you to accept my thanks for your obliging attention to my foolish story."

Mr. O'Donagough followed the movement made by his companion, and turned about to retrace his steps to Brompton; but he was not fully satisfied with the manner in which the conference appeared likely to conclude, and ere he had taken many steps, he said,

"Will you, before we part, permit me to make one observation, my dear sir?"

The young man bowed his willingness to hear it.

"It is never wise," resumed Mr. O'Donagough, "believe me, sir, it is never wise to repose a half-confidence in any man. I will not charge myself with any greater infirmity of curiosity than I believe affects all the rest of us; but neither will I attempt to deny that I

do feel, and shall feel a desire, perfectly idle as I am ready to confess, to learn your real name. You must be aware that the generality of men might feel this without confessing it; but I have still a very fresh remembrance of the amiable manner in which your gay spirits beguiled the tedium of our long voyage, and I cannot resist the friendly feeling which prompts me to advise your trusting me with a name, which I will tell you frankly, cannot be long hidden from me. You will, perhaps, as the season advances, be likely to meet me more frequently in London society than you may expect. Though I have no secrets to keep me silent, I am not much given to talk of my own family and connexions, or you would probably know by this time, that I am highly connected, as well as my wife, who you may perhaps have heard mention her family."

"No, sir, never," replied the young man, drily, and with a feeling, not perhaps very carefully concealed, that he did not feel any great interest on the subject.

"I think you told me you were in the army?" said Mr. O'Donagough.

"I did, sir," replied the *ci-devant* Jack, with some haughtiness; "but I did not imagine the information could give you any right to cross-question me."

"Believe me, I have no such intention; I was about to convey information, not to seek it; and if you will judge me fairly, you must, I think, perceive that my only possible motive for pursuing this conversation is, to prevent your fancying yourself more secure from all chance of my discovering what you wish to conceal, than you really are. I alluded to your profession, sir, because I conceive that it renders it almost certain you must know the name of General Hubert."

"Know the name of General Hubert?" repeated the young man, suddenly standing still, and looking earnestly in the face of his companion, "most assuredly I know his name. May I inquire your reason for asking the question?"

"The General's lady is my wife's niece," quietly replied Mr. O'Donagough.

The effect of this announcement, which was made at random, without the slightest idea that the General's name was better known to his companion than that of any other officer of equal rank, was sufficiently strong to convince the speaker that his young listener was at least in some degree in his power. The youth changed colour, began to speak, then suddenly checked himself, and at length ejaculated more as if thinking aloud, than with the purpose of making any communication, "This is indeed a most unexpected coincidence!"

"Are you acquainted with the General?" said Mr. O'Donagough, without appearing to notice his agitation.

"Very well—very much—I am very much acquainted with him," stammered the young man in reply, and then added rapidly, and as if from the impulse of a sudden determination, "It must indeed be in vain for me to attempt any further concealment from you, Mr. O'Donagough. May I hope that in giving you my full confidence, I am giving it to a friend who will kindly seek to assist, rather than thwart me?"

With an air of candour and sincere good-will that was really touching, Mr. O'Donagough stood still for a moment, and extending both his hands, received that of his companion between them.

"Be very sure of it, my dear young friend!" said he, cordially shaking and pressing the hand he held. "Be very sure of it—I can have no motive on earth for betraying a confidence that does me both honour and pleasure. Tell me your real name, 'dear Jack,' and it shall be henceforth numbered among those of the friends whom I most desire to serve."

"I am Sir Henry Seymour," said the young man, and so saying, he withdrew his hand, as if by a movement that was involuntary, yet at the same moment declared himself much obliged, and quite confident that Mr. O'Donagough would faithfully keep the promise he had given him.

"Now then, let us return to the ladies, my dear Sir Henry!" said the well-pleased Mr. Allen O'Donagough.

"You are very good, but I must beg you to

excuse me," replied his companion; "I have, in fact, business which obliges me to visit the Horse-guards immediately. Pray make my compliments to the ladies. Good morning!"

"But for God's sake don't go, my dear Sir Henry, till you tell me where I can find you again! Besides, I have fifty things to say to you. I will walk a little way towards the Horse-guards with you. I want you to tell me beyond all things, how such a gay young fellow as you are, ever came to be so *very much acquainted* with my stiff nephew-in-law General Hubert?"

"Sir Edward Stephenson was my guardian," replied Sir Henry Seymour, with ill-concealed reluctance.

"Ay, ay, that explains it—Lady Stephenson is Hubert's sister. I don't know Sir Edward as yet; but what a capital good fellow his brother Frederic is! We have just parted from him at Brighton. Did you ever visit him there, Sir Henry? The fine fellow has found out the only good house in the place,

and famous feeds he gives there, I promise you. What a pretty little toy his wife is, isn't she? So like a wax doll—but she is a nice little creature too, so friendly where she takes a fancy! Patty was a prodigious favourite, and though she is too young to go out much without her mother, I did not quite like to refuse, because it was such a near connection, and I saw so plainly that she meant to be kind, and hoped to be an advantage to our young exotic. But, to tell you the truth, my dear fellow, she was a *little* too good-natured to our dear Agnes's second son Compton, who, *entre nous* be it spoken, was much sweeter upon his cousin Patty than I quite approved. I don't like love-making between such very near relations, and though it was as clear as light that my girl had no particular fancy for him—in fact she always seemed to be thinking of something else—God knows what—though it was most perfectly clear that Patty did not very much like it, the good-natured Nora would constantly ask him every evening that we were there, and that, in fact, was constantly. However, he is

young enough to forget it, and we must trust to that."

All this wild-sounding rattle, so unlike the grave and meditative tone which O'Donagough had been practising with General Hubert, was not assumed without a purpose; or rather, it was not assumed without many purposes. It was necessary, in the first place, to establish beyond the possibility of doubt, the important truth that he was what he declared himself to be, namely, the near connexion and intimate associate of General Hubert himself, and everybody belonging to him. It was important too, that Sir Henry Seymour should be made to understand that the blooming Patty was already an object of tender attention to others; and beyond all else, it was important that his own manners with the young baronet should, from the first, assume that air of easy gossiping frankness which was, as he had often found, the most certain prelude to profitable intimacy.

The first item in this list of reasons might have sufficed, had Mr. O'Donagough been fully aware of all the weight it carried with it. At

the first statement of a near connexion between the families of Hubert and O'Donagough, the young man's heart swelled with indignant incredulity; but the mass of evidence contained in the familiar mention of the whole race, by a person of Mr. O'Donagough's age and appearance, together with an assumption of relationship, which, however improbable, was not likely to have been invented, succeeded in convincing him that such was the fact; and the moment this was achieved, all that followed was wholly superfluous. Nothing like a cold return for offered civility was to be feared from Sir Henry Seymour towards any one who could boast the advantage of such a relationship. His attachment to the whole Hubert family was, in fact, unbounded; he considered himself under the deepest obligation to them for their constant kindness to his young sister, and was not likely to forget the lenient gentleness with which his own errors had been treated. Yet, though all this was likely very greatly to influence his conduct, it could not alter his feelings, and he groaned in spirit

when, having at last got rid of his ship acquaintance, he meditated on all the irksome annoyances to which this most unfortunate rencounter was likely to lead.

That its effect on the other parties was quite as much opposed to this, as the positions assigned to the North and South Poles, need hardly be mentioned. The calculating Mr. O'Donagough seemed to tread on air as he paced back to Brompton, after accompanying his new favourite to the archway of the Horse-guards. Visions of little profitable evenings passed at home; of his name set down, and favourably balloted for, at fashionable clubs; of his own hospitalities returned, by dinners with the gay young guardsman; and finally of a match for his blooming Patty, which would not only gratify all his ambitious wishes for her, but ensure to himself, as firmly at least as anything could, the power of holding on to the class among whom it was the darling desire of his heart to move—all seemed to flash before him in such bright but palpable distinctness, that he felt the glorious game to be

entirely in his own hands. He had, in one word, got possession of the young man's secret, and it depended on himself to make a good use of it.

He found the two Miss Perkinses returned when he reached their dwelling; and the gabble of female tongues which greeted his ears, as he mounted to the drawing-room, was delightful to him, for it sounded like a flourish of trumpets announcing the return of a victor. If they were thus joyous with what they knew already, what would their feelings be when they should learn all of which he had so skilfully achieved the knowledge?

No shadow of mystery or reserve was now left to injure the happy union between the Perkinses and O'Donagoughs, and it was therefore with unmitigated freedom that the anxious mother exclaimed, as he entered, "Now then! Out with it, Donny! what is his real name, after all?"

Mr. O'Donagough looked upon the little circle with a benignant smile.

"Don't stand grinning there, papa!" cried

Patty, rushing towards him, and seizing upon the collar of his coat, with the consciousness that he and his news at that moment particularly belonged to herself. "Tell us all you know this very moment, or you shall find that you had better not tease me."

"Tease you, my beauty? No, faith, I must not tease you any more; for I must say, for a young lady of fifteen, you have got up as nice a little love affair as the most prudent parent could desire. The gentleman is Sir Henry Seymour, ladies, and, as I have every reason to believe, a man of large fortune, and high connexions."

"Good gracious! Only think!" said Miss Perkins the elder. "My adored Patty! How I wish you joy," said Miss Perkins the younger.

"Nobody in their senses could ever doubt that my girl was likely to do well," was pronounced by Mrs. O'Donagough, with infinite dignity and very stately composure; while Patty, who, whatever she might come to hereafter, had not yet attained such perfect self-

command, started back, and joyously clapping her hands as she bounded in a prodigious jump from the floor, exclaimed, "Shall I be my lady, then, when I am Jack's wife? Shall I, papa, upon your life and honour?"

END OF VOL. II.

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